

Proposal of Special Issue for *Higher Education Quarterly*

Proposed Special Issue Theme:

Exploring academic leadership from a diverse perspective

Proposed by special issue guest editors

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1. The overview and rationale of the Special Issue

Higher education institutions around the world have been experiencing pressures resulting in substantial changes. Major forces that impact higher education institutions can be considered as the growing importance of international profiling, international consortia, tuition fees, funding scarcity, external research funds, increased accountability and the emergence of private higher education institution (Van Vught, 2011; Zomer & Benneworth, 2011; De Boer, Enders, & Leisyte, 2007; Knight, 2007).

Conceptualizing academic leadership is necessary for fostering changes in higher education. With the blooming studies in leadership, different concepts and theories about academic leadership have been defined and modified with passage of time. Leadership theories and styles have been widely discussed in literature. However, academic leadership in the field of higher education and how it is facing the changes in higher education has not been sufficiently studied.

The way that academic work is managed has changed in favour of enhanced managerial control and increasing administrative demands on academic staff. Leaders are expected to achieve organizational objectives and promote change. The normative elements shifted the emphasis towards ideals, simplicity and concrete solutions.

Traditional conceptualization regarding academic leadership emphasizes the number of tasks or behaviours performed by single individuals (Pani, 2017; Ramsden, 1994). In this light, Ramsden (1994) defines academic leadership as several responsibilities, including leadership in teaching, research, or planning visions. However, several researchers have claimed that this conceptual approach is not suitable for the contemporary context of HE (Pani, 2017; Rost, 1993). The main reason for this is that leadership in the current academic setting is no longer the work or result of a single individual; rather, it is a collaborative endeavour among group

members (Pani, 2017; Rost, 1993). With the blossoming of studies on leadership in academic settings recently, the notion of academic leadership has been widely defined. Based on the disciplines of transformation (Astin & Astin, 2000), these studies have conceptualized academic leadership as a process of fostering change. Based on the operations of leadership, Rowley (1997) argued that leadership is highly attributed to setting and imparting visions. Similarly, Kekale (2005) claimed that leadership refers to an orientation towards human relations alongside leading and empowering people. Leadership in academic settings truly is, going beyond individual leaders and, at the same time, involving leadership processes in more distributed and contextual terms. Academic leadership has become the key driver of a network of interacting individuals by consensus rather than a phenomenon that arises from the individual (Spillane & Orlina, 2005). All of these changes increase the pressure on academic leaders mainly because of the lack of the competencies and skills needed for the new roles of academic leaders in different levels (Parrish, 2015).

The focus of this special issue is to study academic leadership from a diverse perspective. First, academic leadership concerns different levels (high, middle and young). Studies are needed to further investigate the features, challenges and profiles for the different levels of academic leaders. Second, diversity in terms of gender specific issues related to academic leadership. Third, diversity in terms of academic leadership conceptualisation, features and challenges from a contextual and cultural perspectives. For this, we mainly engage studies from Chinese and European universities.

The choice of Chinese and European universities is based on the following. First, Chinese and European universities have a relatively long cultural history in terms of how their higher education systems are built up. This provides interesting perspectives to study these universities. Second, studies that bring the understanding and insights regarding academic leadership from higher education among Chinese and European universities are scarce. Enhanced understanding from these perspectives can bring to the international audience more in-depth vision and view sharing on this.

Zhu and Zayim-Kurtay (2018) mentioned that besides differences in organizational, social and cultural environments, European and Chinese universities share some common global challenges toward academic leadership. They highlighted that these differences and similarities set ground for strengthening and pursuing EU-China higher education cooperation and collaboration. In this vein, exploring academic leadership from a global and diverse perspective can facilitate the enhanced understanding and transformation of academic leadership concepts as well as enhance the capacities of the academic leaders and universities

(Hamlin & Patel, 2017). Despite these differences and similarities as well as the efforts to collaborate, few have discussed the knowledge gaps from a diverse and international perspective regarding academic leadership (d'Hooghe et al., 2018; Zhu & Zayim-Kurtay, 2019).

Therefore, this special issue is intended to fill the gap to study the concepts and practices of academic leadership involving difference levels, gender perspectives, and the multi-contexts including European and Chinese universities.

This special issue aims to enhance our understanding (1) concept, profiles, and competencies of academic leadership in different levels and contexts; (2) the (changing) roles and challenges of academic leaders; and (3) the needs and perceived effectiveness of professional development for academic leaders.

2. Outline of the special issue articles

- *Editorial: Exploring academic leadership from a diverse perspective*
 1. *From a Scholar to an Academic Leader: Experiences from Middle Level Leaders with dual Identity among Chinese Universities*
 2. *The changing roles of middle level academic leaders in Europe and China*
 3. *The Positioning and Realization of Academic Leadership in the Network Society*
 4. *Characteristics of Female Presidents in China's Leading Universities: A Comparative: Perspective from European Universities*
 5. *Does Gender Matter in Academic Leadership? Senior Management Experiences of Women in Turkish and Chinese Universities*
 6. *The Needs and Measures of Chinese University Leadership Development*
 7. *Leadership development programs for mid-level leaders: The effects of peer interaction and motivation on satisfaction of workshop participants*

Below we provide the editorial abstract and 7 abstracts for the issue followed by brief CVs of the guest editors and authors.

3. Abstracts of the articles

- *Editorial: Exploring academic leadership from a diverse perspective*

Chang Zhu & Aysun Caliskan

Academic leadership is going beyond the work of a single individual; rather it is a collaborative effort among the stakeholders. Recently, it is conceptualized as a process of responding effectively to change at different levels. Therefore, executing an effective academic leadership at different levels becomes a focal point for universities. Thus, this Special Issue brings 7 articles together to enhance the understanding of competencies, roles and needs of academic leaders at senior, middle and young leadership positions at Chinese and European universities. This editorial introduces the focuses, the inter-links and contributions of the special issue articles.

1. *From a Scholar to an Academic Leader: Experiences from Middle Level Leaders with dual Identity among Chinese Universities*

Qu Xiaoxiao

National Academy of Education Administration (NAEA)

With the fundamental changes in the scale and structure of universities, university governance needs more and more professional leadership talents. Among the university administrators, those who are both scholars and administrators are an important part of the professionalization of university academic leadership. Thus, this study will take the middle level talents with dual identity among Chinese universities (most Double-first Class Construction) as research objects to examine the matching status of their capabilities and competencies, and to analyse the growth path from a scholar to an academic leader. The starting point will be a conceptual framework drawing on the existing literature on competency model and leadership development theory. In addition to general descriptive analysis of middle academic leadership, the study will discuss specific job description from different types of position and its corresponding competency requirements. In this part, this study will use the key behaviour event interview and questionnaire survey approach to build a competency model of middle academic leadership in Chinese universities. Further, the study will focus on the analysis of the matching status of middle academic leaders with dual identity. Lastly, through qualitative

analysis the study will explore the process to fill the gap between a scholar and an academic leader to summarize a general growth path.

2. The changing roles of middle level academic leaders in Europe and China

Aysun Caliskan, Chang Zhu, and Dinh Ngoc Bich Khuyen
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

As a result of internalization, the structural changes in higher education systems along with the changes in the relationship between the government and the higher educational institutions have been often brought to the fore. In addition, new public management perspective has led to changes in strategic action, accountability, autonomy and decision-making process. Taken together, these emphasize the importance of academic leadership in fulfilling objectives and providing change which has caused a shift in the leadership roles. Thus, the new profiles of academic leaders as coordinators or innovators have permeated all around the world. Under the pressure of the same challenges, Chinese and European universities face the need for changing the roles of academic leaders. Besides the global ones, universities are also under the context-specific challenges which are apparently valid for both Chinese and European academic leaders. In response to the differences and similarities, this study aims to fill a gap in the changing roles of middle level academic leaders in European (Belgium, Romania, Austria, Poland, Turkey, etc.) and Chinese (Wuhan, Beijing, Guangxi, Shanghai, Yunnan, NAEA) universities through semi structured interviews. The findings will be expected to enhance the understanding of roles of middle level academic leaders with a focus on international cooperation.

3. The Positioning and Realization of Academic Leadership in the Network Society

Xiaoli Yang
National Academy of Education Administration, China

With the development of digital economy and the arrival of online education 2.0 era, various elements of university governance and academic leadership, such as talent training, discipline construction, teacher construction, scientific research, administration, social service and so on, need to be redefined. These elements have widened the network society of inter and supranational actors across the globe. Network society is a concept relative to the real society which emphasizes the sum of the relationship between people and the network environment.

Moreover, it has the characteristics of openness, innovation, interaction and sharing, which makes the discipline culture, college culture, professional culture and system culture within the academic system from passive acceptance to active construction. As the core force of university governance and academic leadership, academic leaders should move from single academic research to pluralistic governance drive in the network society. This article first investigates the changing roles of middle level and young level academic leaders in Chinese C9 universities around the work, belief and power of the higher education system, then analyzes academic leaders' functional confusion and needs in the network society, and finally explores the key elements and new leadership models of academic leadership with combing national needs, requirements and self-development in the network society. Overall, this paper puts forward the practical path for academic leaders to improve academic level, highlight academic value, create academic culture and lead the development of universities with a view to providing reference for university leadership construction and university management innovation.

4. Characteristics of Female Presidents in China's Leading Universities: A Comparative Perspective from European Universities

Xiang Yao & Meiyang Jing

Gender inequality in higher education leadership is a hot topic in modern university governance reform. In recent years, universities around the world have made continuous efforts and obtained remarkable achievements to eliminate the traditional prejudice against women, break down gender barriers, and create more opportunities for women to hold managerial positions in higher education. Furthermore, compared with male leaders, females have their own unique working talents, ideas and attitudes, which bring innovative perspectives and solutions to higher education organizations; tend to have better skills in communication, coordination, cooperation, as well as interpersonal skills; and are often inclined to more democratic and participative leadership style. Those characteristics, coupled with the continuous improvement of women's capabilities, make women to become an integral part of leadership groups in universities. Therefore, it is no longer breaking news for a woman to become a first-class university's president. China, which is committed to constructing world-class universities and actively advocates women's equal rights in higher education, has also made positive progresses and contributions in promoting women's career development, especially as high-level leaders in universities. This study will, firstly, make a theoretical review on the advantages and barriers of women's participation in higher education leadership; secondly, systematically sorts out the

policy development context of promoting women's equal right to leadership career development in higher education in China; thirdly, based on the data of presidents of 137 Chinese "Double-First-Class" universities, this study will present the status quo of female university presidents, including their demographic features and the characteristics of major human capital, such as academic ability, internationalization background and diversity of work experience. It will, for one thing, compare the status quo of female presidents of these Chinese universities with that of European research universities so as to see whether the proportion and characteristics of female leaders in China's leading universities are different from those in European research universities; for another, use variance analysis to determine whether there are significant differences of demographic features and major human capitals between Chinese female and male university presidents. Finally, based on the above analysis, this study will bring up some critical and feasible strategies in order to promote female leadership development in Chinese higher education.

5. *Does Gender Matter in Academic Leadership? Senior Management Experiences of Women in Turkish and Chinese Universities*

Hale Işık-Güler and Yasemin Erdoğan-Öztürk
Middle East Technical University

Previous research on the relationship of gender and leadership underline that women and men are expected to face and/or demonstrate different behaviours; possess different capabilities and characteristics in order to be perceived as 'effective' leaders in the educational sphere. It is also noted that women in administrative positions and women who seek such positions face barriers and glass ceilings in the educational leadership and management realms which are predominantly surrounded by a male-centered discourse. With respect to the existing literature, this study aims to illuminate how gender and power as dynamic and interrelated concepts operate in Turkey and China throughout the leadership experiences of women in academia and provide insight into women's experiences as senior leaders at universities. It also seeks to explore women's reflexive experiences and perceptions concerning educational leadership. Designed as a qualitative research, the study employs narrative inquiry as its main methodological tool. The narratives of 20 female senior administrators at some selected European and Chinese universities are collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Analyzing comparative perceptions of women leaders with respect to the leadership in the higher education contexts in two different countries, this paper thoroughly explores the potential effects and implications of gender in terms of power

dynamics, equity and diversity, management strategies and interpretations of gendered experiences as well as the local dynamics of each country.

6. The Needs and Measures of Chinese University Leadership Development

Li Yongxian and Li Qiang
National Academy of Education Administration (NAEA)

This study aims to analyse the academic leadership capacity building needs of Chinese university leaders on value guidance, crisis management, team building, and internationalization as well as understand the needs and measures of Chinese university leadership development. The objects of study are the nearly 304 middle and young-level academic leaders as well as one-hour face-to-face interview with about 100 academic middle and young-level leaders who attended the programs at NAEA in recent three years. They include deans, director of university general affairs office, director of office for personnel, director of office for science & technology, and so on. In addition, data has been collected from nearly 200 university presidents who attended the programs at NAEA in recent three year.

The leaders are from both national key universities and regional/provincial universities across China. The paradigm of mixed methods will be adopted in this study. First, the study uses self-developed questionnaire to investigate the needs of academic leadership capacity building among Chinese university leaders. Second, the semi-structured interview will be utilised to Chinese university leaders in order to gain a deeper understanding of the specific needs. Based on the findings, the study is expected to propose relevant suggestions and measures to enhance the leadership capacity development of Chinese universities.

7. Leadership development programs for mid-level leaders: The effects of peer interaction and motivation on satisfaction of workshop participants

Ngoc Bich Khuyen Dinh, Chang Zhu, Aysun Caliskan
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

There has been a significant increase in interest in the development of educational leadership in recent years, not least in the school sector. However, little research exists on how leaders in higher education have learnt to lead, particularly those in ‘middle-leadership’ positions such as heads of faculties and departments. The present study investigated the effect of peer interaction and motivation on attendees’ satisfaction with the leadership development programs. Of 54

participants, the majority of workshop attendees were middle-level leaders from both European universities and Chinese universities who participated in the leadership development programs organized under an EU project. Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed in order to validate the instrument and to answer the research questions, respectively. The findings show that peer interaction has a direct effect on satisfaction whereas motivation has an indirect effect. These constructs significantly account for a moderate variance in learners' satisfaction with the leadership development workshops ($R^2 = .504$). To this end, the findings highlight the importance of dispositional factors regarding the quality of the leadership development program addressed to mid-level leaders in the HE setting and the potential of such programmes to enhance knowledge and capacities of academic leaders and staff regarding university governance and leadership in a diverse context.

3. Brief CVs of the guest editors and authors

Guest editors

Chang Zhu is a full professor in Educational Sciences at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) since 2010. She is the promoter and principal investigator of several key fundamental research projects in the field of higher education, internationalization, university governance, academic leadership, international academic mobility, student competence and literacy development, educational innovation, online and blended learning, MOOC, ICT-supported learning and social inclusion.

Her research mainly focuses on higher education governance and academic leadership; the implementation of educational innovations in schools and higher education and the examination of cultural, organizational culture, innovations in higher education.

She has been and is coordinating several large scale fundamental and collaborative international research projects about higher education institutions. She was the project coordinator of the Erasmus Mundus Action 3 project: EU-China DOC project (2013-2016)- Enhancing the visibility of European Higher education and strengthening the dialogue and cooperation with Chinese stakeholders in the field of doctoral education. She also coordinated LEAD project (2015-2018)- Enhancing the capacity of higher education institutions related to governance and academic leadership in the context of innovation and internationalisation of higher education in EU and China. She is currently coordinating LEAD2 project (2019-2021)-

Enhancing capacity building in university governance and academic leadership in EU and China.

She has published a wide variety of international journals and international books. In addition, she was special issue guest editor for *European Journal of Higher Education* (Volume 7, 2017 - Issue 3 Reforms and collaborations in Europe-China doctoral education); and book guest editor for the book on '*University Governance and Academic Leadership in the EU and China* (Zhu & Zayim-Kurtay, 2019).

Aysun Caliskan is a postdoctoral researcher in Educational Sciences at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). After receiving her master's in educational measurement and evaluation, she turned to studies in higher education where she took full advantage of combining her background. Next, she gained her PhD at VUB in the field of higher education. Building on her PhD work, she mainly focuses on academic leadership, university governance, organizational culture and educational innovations. She has been involved in international projects in higher education. In addition, she participated in workshops and activities in higher education, academic leadership and university governance. Her researches have been published in national and international books and journals.

Authors (by abstract order)

Qu Xiaoxiao is an Associate Researcher at the Department of School Management of NAEA. She gained her doctoral degree from Peking University, majoring in Education Economics and Management. She was a visiting scholar at University of Michigan in 2010, sponsored by China Scholarship Council (CSC). Her research focus on university governance, higher education institution management and reform, private education, organizational sociology. She has participated in multiple projects as co-investigator and team member financed by the National Social Science Fund, the National Office for Education Sciences Planning, and the Ford Foundation. She has published 9 articles in CSSCI , such as "An Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Governance Structure of the World-class University: A Case Study of the University of Michigan", and "Analysis on the Path Characteristics of Applied Transformation and Development in Local College and Universities: Based on a Questionnaire Survey of 173 Leaders.

Aysun Caliskan (please see above)

Chang Zhu (please see above)

Dinh Ngoc Bich Khuyen is currently a PhD Candidate in Educational Sciences at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Her research focuses on various topics of higher education governance and academic leadership, particularly the examination of factors that are related to the implementation of leadership development programs. She is passionate about interdisciplinary work and curious about exploring the novel options quantitative and computational methods offer for research.

Xiaoli Yang comes from Hebei Province, China. She is a Master of Education and a teacher at National Academy of Education Administration, Beijing. The research field is University Curriculum and Teaching.

Xiang Yao is an assistant professor at the National Academy of Education Administration (NAEA) in China. She got PhD in public administration from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, US in 2014. Her research interests include but not limited to performance management in higher education, human resource management in education, citizen trust in government, citizen participation, etc. She is currently conducting two provincial research projects (PI) focusing on the national construction plan of “Double-First Class” and the advancement of junior scholars’ academic competency.

Meiying Jing is a deputy director and associate researcher in National Academy of Education Administration (NAEA). She is also a PhD student at Graduate School of Education, Peking University. She was a visiting research fellow at the University of Sydney from June to August in 2009 as an Australian Government Endeavor Awardee. Funded by the Chinese Scholarship Council, she conducted a 3- month research visit at the School of Management, the University of Tampere in 2017. Her research interest is about the transformation of Chinese local universities, the research development at UAS and the leadership development in higher education.

Hale Isik-Guler works as an Associate Professor of Linguistics at the Department of Foreign Language Education, Middle East Technical University, Ankara. Her work can be best described as being at the intersection of Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics and Corpus Linguistics. More specifically, her academic interests mainly lie within the domains of cross-cultural (im)politeness research, spoken corpora compilation and socio-pragmatic analysis of corpora, gender and identity work, conversation analysis, genre analysis, intercultural communication and applied linguistics. She also has ample experience in educational leadership practices as a former Vice Dean of the Faculty of Education and later Adv. to the Rector for Internationalization during which she oversaw all international engagement initiatives, strategies and programs at METU.

Yasemin Erdogan-Ozturk is currently a PhD student in English Language Teaching Program, Linguistics Track at Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey. Her research interests lie within the areas of sociocultural linguistics and critical discourse studies. She primarily focuses on critical discourse analysis; gender, sexuality and language; migration and multilingualism; new media discourses; social identity and interaction.

Li Yongxian is the Associate Professor and Vice Dean of the Department of School Management, National Academy of Education Administration. She is responsible for teaching and research management within the department. For a long time, Dr. LI has been engaging in the design and implementation of training programs for university presidents and university mid-level managers. Her research interests include school management, leadership development of university presidents.

Li Qiang is the senior project manager at the Office of International Affairs, National Academy of Education Administration. Her primary responsibility includes the management and coordination for Chinese university leadership development projects. Her research interests focus on education management and university leadership development. LI Qiang obtained her master's degree on education management from Beijing Normal University. She received her bachelor's degree from the School of Foreign Languages and Literature, Beijing Normal University.

Dinh Ngoc Bich Khuyen (please see above)

Chang Zhu (please see above)

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4. Proposed timeline

- Deadline for full paper submission: September 30, 2020
- Deadline for full paper SI guest editor feedback and resubmission by authors: October 30, 2020
- Deadline of full paper review/feedback by international peer reviewers: November 30, 2020
- Deadline of the re-submission of the revision of final full paper: December 30, 2020

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