WORKBOOK 4

HE Transformation Leadership – an analysis of emergent

and high potential leadership styles

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INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP A ND CHANGE
MANAGEMENT I N HIGHER EDUCATION

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Part 1: BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

1.1 Project Background

This workbook is an output of the EU-funded NEWLEAD project on leadership development and institutional transformation at universities in Europe. The main objective of this project is to build the capacity of university leaders across Europe to manage institutional transformation at a time of change and uncertainty. NEWLEAD started with a survey-based mapping exercise on leadership development and institutional transformation at universities in Europe. This led to the publication of a comprehensive study "Institutional transformation and leadership development at universities: a mapping exercise" (2021) incorporating the key findings of these surveys and addressing both drivers and management of institutional transformation agendas. This study also addressed the changing profiles of institutional leaders in higher education and the patchwork of executive leadership development schemes evident across the network.

Building on insights from the above-mentioned study, two focus groups on leadership development and institutional transformation were organized in 2022. These focus groups - hosted by Ramon Llull University (Barcelona) and the University of Iceland (Reykjavik) - highlighted the scale and scope of transformation in the Higher Education (HE) landscape and the different ways in which participating institutions have been responding. They were aimed at higher education executives interested in further enhancing their leadership skills. The focus groups primarily targeted members of the executive leadership teams at universities and other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), be these with academic or professional profile.

1.2. Workbook 4

One of the features of this project is the development of a small series of workbooks designed to provide guidance and insight to practitioners in education management as they engage with transformation challenges. In this workbook (Workbook 4), our focus falls on the higher education landscape and on the different ways in which university leaders can lead teams and institutions through a period of profound change. As such, the workbook contributes to the NEWLEAD project and mission by identifying core transformation challenges and the leadership choices that HE leaders will be required to make at a time of change and transition. Analysis is informed by the comprehensive study (2021) and preceding surveys. It is also informed by the outcomes of the Barcelona and Reykjavik focus groups related in the report Leading through disruptive transformations in higher education. The testimonials incorporated into the workbook are from focus group participants. Though focus falls on leadership approaches and styles, the workbook does not expand on the professional development that can strengthen leadership capacity and performance. Here, the reader is directed to earlier NEWLEAD reports and workbooks.

1.3. Setting the Context

Universities operate in a global environment that is evolving quickly. At the macro-level, emerging technologies, and new political, economic, socio-demographic and environmental realities, create a fluid VUCA setting. Now a familiar term to those in higher education, VUCA describes an operational context characterized by volatility (V), uncertainty (U), complexity (C), and ambiguity (A). This in turn serves to re-frame roles and demands. Current and future higher education leaders must respond and adapt to these macro-level changes whilst also managing new structures of governance, work, and financing. These challenges exist at the meso-level and intersect with macro-level forces.

An in-depth analysis by the European Parliamentary Research Service, "The future of tertiary education in Europe" (2020) outlined six challenges for higher education in the EU:

1. The importance of staying relevant to current and future opportunities. New skills are required to support an economy that is sustainable and green, and embraces digital transformation, while responding to an aging demographic and a more diverse workforce.
2. The impact of the digital revolution, in particular artificial intelligence and big data, on academic research and teaching. Investments in digital infrastructure are required to adapt to the evolving digital landscape.
3. The need to balance collaboration with business and maintaining the academic mission. Considerations include partnerships between research institutions and business, and the use and type of research outputs.
4. The potential to improve global and intra-EU collaboration among institutions. This includes navigating the competition for international students, removing barriers to student mobility within the EU, and promoting dialogue on higher education policy and cooperation with other countries.
5. The drive for quality assurance beyond international rankings. It is important to have evaluations that are understandable and transparent.
6. The financing of higher education through public and private contributions. This also extends to the affordability of higher education which could present barriers and affect inclusion.

The European Council's Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021–2030) has similar scope and emphasis. This lays out five strategic priorities seen to apply to close to 5,000 higher education institutions, enrolling 17.5 million tertiary education students (European Commission, 2022). These are:

1. Improving quality, equity, inclusion, and success for all in education and training.
2. Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all.
3. Enhancing competences and motivation in the education profession.
4. Reinforcing European higher education.
5. Supporting the green and digital transitions in and through education and training.

The Resolution clearly positions European universities and HEIs as "actors of change" in the twin green and digital transitions. The strategy supports the full engagement of universities in unfolding green and digital transitions, including the equipping of young people and lifelong learners with digital skills and skills for the green transition. The strategy also calls on Europe's HEIs to help develop green solutions through technological and social innovation, with a clear expectation that the higher education sector has a key role to play. It also underscores the role and responsibility of HEIs in ensuring greater equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in education and wider society.

Elsewhere, the OECD's Resourcing Higher Education Report (2020) identified several challenges facing the sector due to economic, demographic and political factors. The changing labour market brought upon by digital transformation and demand by employers for new skills mean higher education institutions need to reevaluate their programmes. Furthermore, the population is aging with people working longer including past age 65. This is creating increased demand for lifelong learning. Digitalization is transforming learning and is bringing new entrants to the provision of higher education. This means universities need to adapt to meet the needs of diverse learners. Government authorities, funding bodies and quality assurance organizations are expecting higher education institutions to deliver their academic mission efficiently and equitably, and that their programmes are relevant and of suitable quality. Relevance includes a sharpened focus on environmental, societal and governance (ESG) issues and transitions.

A [KPMG report on the future of higher education](#) (2020) suggests that disruption is under way and that institutions need to be able to transform in response to changes in the world of education. The report argues that institutions with high levels of flexibility and agility to transform the back office (administrative support), operating model and technology infrastructure are better equipped to navigate in a disruptive world.

1.4 Transformation Agendas

Much of this reality is reflected in the NEWLEAD project surveys discussed in the [comprehensive study (2021)](#). In terms of the principal institutional survey, three-quarters of the respondents confirmed that institutional transformation is a high priority for the leadership team at their institution. The three top priority areas for institutional transformation are identified in survey as:

1. improving efficiency, effectiveness, and value for money (73%)
2. developing the societal mission of the institution (68%)
3. enhancing equity, diversity, and social inclusion (50%)

Other priority areas for institutional transformation include, developing research capacities, digitalization, internationalization, and sustainable development.

Priority number one points to acute financial pressures and changing models of financing. 81% of respondents from national associations in the system-level survey also considered finance as the main driver for institutional transformation. This points to the central influence in HE transformation of the gradual decrease in direct state transfers and funding. In parallel with this we have witnessed the intensification of pressures to identify and secure alternative sources of finance.

The NEWLEAD focus groups underscored the coexistence of challenges stemming from operating environments with those internal to the HEI. These include preparing the institution for an array of challenges related to finance, governance, management, learning and teaching processes, as well as dealing with internal resistance towards transformation and change.

Notwithstanding the pace of development since the last of the 2022 focus groups, the mix of transformation priorities then identified is still applicable today. In all likelihood, the debt-overhangs andinflationary pressures that have characterized the post-pandemic period have only exacerbated pressures around budget and funding. With respect to digital transformation, HEIs continue to focus on and invest in digital transformation processes. Service- and process- focused digitalization remains a route to increased efficiency largely yet unfilled. This is a space where HE can continue to learn from other sectors. Alongside this, generative AI is creating new questions and uncertainties which go to the heart of HEI work and mission. All of this follows on from the digital acceleration turbo-charged by the pandemic.

With respect to societal and green transitions, little has changed to diminish the significance of EDI and ESG action or to direct institutions away from their twin societal and green missions. If anything, institutional mission statements are converging around such goals, which are being promoted by accreditors and other key stakeholders. In the wake of George Floyd, concerns over equity and diversity— in student bodies and among faculty — have grown significantly. Europe continues to see an influx of migrants including those from war-torn Ukraine. Those who settle permanently will require access to education and training as highlighted in the [European Commission's Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021 - 2027)](#). An increasing number of institutions are reframing missions and strategic objectives in connection with the UN SDGs and/or priorities identified in the EU's New Green Deal. This comes with increased focus on their carbon footprints and on their capacity to channel research and education towards ESG topics.

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1.5 The Anatomy of Core Challenges

In addition to the scope and hierarchy of these transformation challenges, we should also consider their anatomy.

First, the problems or challenges that are being addressed - societal, demographic, geo-political, technological, and ecological - are complex and systemic.

Second, when a view is taken of HEIs as being in service to society or as operating as a part of a "social contract" then HEIs may be seen to have an obligation to lead and act in their address. This is underscored by the potential for HEIs to be in receipt of significant public funding or to have an explicit societal mission set for them by regulators or in national legislation.

Third, each requires collaborative action. HEIs are inevitably required to work with each other, government and industry to address their nature and impact. Take the fact that individuals will increasingly need access to education and training throughout their lives as the speed at which knowledge becomes obsolete further accelerates. Effective responses will require a fully tripartite approach.

Attached to this are questions of trust and expectation. The Edelmann Trust Barometer and other studies point to the expectation of publics that corporate and educational leaders play a leadership role on ESG issues at a time when trust is diminished in other public institutions including government and the media. Expectations are also re-setting within our institutions. Students are increasingly vocal on their expectations of their host institutions and organized to effect institutional choices. Employees are increasingly looking for employers with the right values and a focus on public good. According to the Workday Peakon Employee Expectations Report for 2022, employees now expect their employers to help address social and environmental concerns, encouraging employers to make shifts in how they operate. Expectations have surged under the influence of the influx of Gen Z (b. 1995-2015) employees into the workplace.

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Part 2: LEADING CHANGE & TRANSFORMATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1 Leading in Higher Education

Before deeper examination of the leadership of change and transformation in the HE context, it is worthasking three preliminary questions:

i) what do we understand by leadership?
ii) how does leadership differ from management?
iii) who leads in the HE context?

2.1.1 Understanding leadership

Although there are many definitions of leadership, we use Yukl's (2006), which says that "leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 3). This is a fairly orthodox view of leadership in that it associates leadership with both the ability to develop goals or vision and to influence and motivate others to move towards their realization.

Whilst a universal definition of leadership is lacking, the essence of leadership lies indeed in having a group of individuals willingly follow and be influenced by a person's actions, ideas, or vision. Leadershipinvolves engaging people in a vision and strategy and empowering them to help deliver on it. It does not stop with the articulation of a vision. Yes, leaders think ahead and strategize but they also harness and develop others to drive and realize the change they target or objectify. In short, leadership might be measured by the ability of a person or persons to inspire and guide others towards a commonpurpose.

In broad conformity with this, the 2021 NEWLEAD report articulates a view that leadership involves engaging people in a strategic vision, empowering people, and guiding or coaching them to achieve more. This report also highlights that leadership itself exists at three discernible levels:

← Self-leadership
← Team leadership
← Strategic leadership

Whereas self-leadership entails an inward focus to achieve personal mastery, team leadership is about the capacity to motivate and inspire a group of people in achieving a common goal. Strategic leadership implies developing a vision for one's institution that enables the latter to remain relevant and successful, especially during disruptive times.

2.1.2 Management versus leadership

Compared to leadership with its visionary element, management is more about working with other people to make sure that the goals an organization has articulated are actually executed. Managers are

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responsible for establishing an organization's structure and monitoring the progress that's being made towards reaching common goals. Simon Sinek's Golden Circle signals the essential difference here. In Sinek's view, leaders set the direction of their company or organization and pursue a universal vision. This is the *why* question of organizational vision and purpose. Managers, on the other hand, focus on *how* that vision can be accomplished in the most effective and efficient way possible.

The NEWLEAD focus groups show that the differentiation between leading and managing is often not clear to those involved and the two concepts are used interchangeably. This may be because most higher education senior executives have both elements in their roles. The duality of leading vs managing a university is intrinsically linked to different cultures, positions and interpretations given to who constitutes the leadership team at universities. Previous studies exemplified how such perceptions are very diverse across Europe, being also influenced by the sort of governance structures found in the different systems.

2.1.3 Who leads in the HE context?

As the existing NEWLEAD reports show, there is no simple picture concerning who is part of the institutional leadership process and phenomenon. While the role of rectors and presidents is specific (typically in CEO function), there is no singular model evident and some leadership structures are more inclusive than others. There is a wide range of leadership roles in universities and the report showed that professional managerial profiles are on the rise across Europe. Returning to the NEWLEAD survey of institutional respondents, in addition to rectors, vice-rectors and Deans, 65% of institutions also consider heads of administration, director generals, and chief operating officers as a part of their leadership teams. In addition to the formal leadership body, respondents included in the broader leadership concept roles such as leaders in research, student representatives, trade union representatives, respected and experienced teaching staff. Several institutional respondents explained that at their university, leadership is not (any longer) perceived in solely hierarchical or formal terms, and that all members of the academic community are encouraged to demonstrate leadership through their work and in their own environments.

Significantly, the focus groups showed how academic leaders and professional leaders typically interact and cooperate in leadership team formations. A balanced team formation enables different perspectives and experiences to be efficiently brought into the strategic development and implementation of the university's goals. Given government actions can significantly impact the attainment of institutional goals, the team approach can help HEIs mitigate risks when academic and professional leaders work together to both shape and respond to public policy.

2.2 HE specificities

Before looking at the adoption and potential of different leadership styles in the HE space, it is worth reflecting on some of the specificities of the HE environment and leadership.

1. HE leadership takes place within a sector that is culturally embedded. HEIs play a key role in the development of their local and national societies and are important cultural actors in their own right. At European level, the sector stands as "a hallmark of our European way of life" and our universities play a pivotal role in the promotion and strengthening of key European values such as freedom of speech, inclusion, and democracy (European Commission, 2022).

2. HE leaders head organizations that have a unique mandate and/or value proposition. Their overarching goal is to advance knowledge and education in contribution to the public good.

By focusing on the provision of quality education, research, and societal service, HEIs represent a unique kind of institution and one for which leaders require a deep understanding of academic, cultural and societal missions. Academic freedom and its protection is a part of this equation, as is the management of faculty (as experts) and associated challenges (see Testimonial #1).

3. HE is a part of the so-called "knowledge economy". HE employees have a relatively high level of specialization and/or intellectual capital. Many professional staff have specialist roles that are knowledge-intensive and faculty roles are rightly regarded as knowledge-based and knowledge-focused. Relevant here is the notion of a university as a "knowledge community" and the recognition of university centers, departments and faculties as akin to epistemic communities creating and disseminating knowledge.

4. Despite the introduction of private-sector practices in the public sector, such as the focus on performance, cost reduction and increased competitiveness, the greater part of the sector is still not driven by the shareholder value logic of many private commercial organizations. As such, goals and KPIs are likely to reflect the fact that the mission of the HEI is multi-faceted with academic and societal missions being of paramount importance. Commercial drivers continue to vary in their form and intensity. For the greater majority of HEIs, performance measurement will not be linked to such indicators as profitability, margin, market capitalization, or share price. And despite the growth of the private sector and the for-profit provider, the public sector remains dominant in terms of scale and output.

5. Finally, although HE sectors are opening up to executive leaders with wider (non-sectoral) experience, academic leaders in public HE settings tend to gain leadership experience through several positions at university. Leadership development classically occurs through the acquisition of experience in different institutional roles: lecturer, head of department, dean, vice-rector, rector. Though empirical study is scant, it is in functional leadership within universities (e.g., in finance, operations, and marketing) that we witness a greater concentration of persons with significant leadership experience from outside of the sector. There are also many instances of leadership positions in universities being representative positions and resting wholly on internal (faculty) support.

Testimonial #1 Vice-Rector (Croatia)

HE institutions have a specific mission and purpose that focuses on providing quality education, conducting research, and contributing to the intellectual and cultural development of society or exerting societal impact. Leaders must align their decisions and actions with these overarching goals, they must be forward-thinking, adaptable and committed to advancing the institution's mission and societal impact. Leaders must also navigate a complex system of shared governance and work with multiple stakeholders to build consensus and achieve institutional goals. Another particular challenge is academic freedom. Faculty members enjoy academic freedom, which allows them to research and express their ideas without fear of censorship. Leaders must balance the need for academic freedom with the overall vision and values of the institution.

Part 3: LEADERSHIP STYLES AND THEIR PRESENCE IN H.E.

Here then we turn to the question of what leadership styles or approaches are most evident in an HE context and which are most likely to be effective in assisting leaders and organizations to meet their transition or transformation challenges? University leaders must lead projects, teams, and initiatives in an ever more complex environment and in a sector that has many distinctive or particularistic qualities. To do so, they will adopt or blend leadership styles that vary in their form or substance. These can be used situationally or contingently as we will examine below.

A first disclaimer here is that there is relatively little empirical evidence on this subject and recent investigations have been limited in their number and scope. A second is that whilst the authors point to the potential effectiveness of certain leadership styles and approaches, each leadership and transformation scenario is different, and each setting has its own demands. No one-size-fits-all approach is given or recommended here but the more directional and controlling styles of leadership are seen to be generally inferior to those based on the promotion of shared purpose, participation, inclusion, and collaboration.

3.1 A first note on leadership styles

Lewin's identification of primary leadership styles provides a first point of reference for those interested in these styles and what separates them. Lewin et al. (1939) set out to identify different styles of leadership and identified variation between three primary types based on certain behaviours:

Authoritarian (Autocratic) Leadership - the preference of autocratic leaders is to hold onto as much power and decision-making authority as possible. Their approach is one of centralized and hierarchical decision-making with little or no delegation of decision-making power, and they are likely to resist sharing decision-making authority and limit consultation. Autocracy exists in the sense that there is typically a high-power distance between leader and followers and a "command and control" mentality. Authoritarian leaders make decisions independently with little or no input from the rest of the group. In most respects, there is a clear division between the leader and the other (subordinate) members of the organization.

Participative (Democratic) Leadership - Participative or democratic leaders seek feedback and input from subordinates and delegate responsibilities. They encourage conversation and participation in the decision-making process, placing themselves as a participant in a group-based decision-making process that is consultative and inclusive. By allowing and encouraging input from other group members, leaders of this type can make group members feel that there is room for them to contribute. This can help to foster team identity and commitment to institutional goals. One effect is that group members feel more engaged in key processes and may be more motivated.

Delegative (Laissez-faire) Leadership - This style of leadership is very "hands-off" with the leader taking a detached role and giving employees considerable freedom. In this approach, team members enjoy delegated or devolved authority to lead, act, solve problems, and make decisions. Employees proceed as they think best and have the freedom to make decisions quite independently. Though workers can feel insecure at the lack of leader authority (and/or visibility), the trust invested in the autonomous worker can generate both motivation and a sense of responsibility that can contribute to higher performance. Lewin felt that this style of leadership could be effective in the context of a highly skilled and qualified workforce and/or when working with outside experts such as consultants and freelancers. What can emerge in cases where a laissez-faire approach is adopted is a decentralized organizational model. This presents both risk and opportunity. The idea that leaders might be "passive" is closely linked to this way of leading.

The Lewin leadership styles are commonly referenced and are essentially behavioral in type. The broad implication is that they are unique and exclusive. Lewin did not discuss leaders mixing styles or approaches. Similarly Burns (1978) advanced the idea of two mutually exclusive leadership styles, the *transactional* (where leadership is structured around task and reward principles) and transformational(focused on substantial change through collective endeavor).

Transactional leadership - Transactional leadership is focused on setting out tasks for subordinates and implementing a system of incentives and rewards for good performance. It is a results-oriented approach that translates into a view that achievement should be rewarded and under-performance penalized. As such, there are structured incentive-based dealings between leaders and followers. It is a more directingand instructional style of leadership, and the focus is more on results than on relationships. Transactional leadership itself has different versions and the contingent reward approach to transactional leadership is one where promotions, rewards, bonuses etc. are used to reward good performance. This can be effective to the extent that some people are motivated by rewards. It is less likely to inspire commitment to shared purpose or organizational transformation as it lacks an emphasis on engagement and shared intentionality.

Transformational Leadership - Transformational leaders deliver substantial change by inspiring followers or team members to achieve transformative results. Transformational leadership has a visionary quality and leaders of this type can motivate and inspire followers to realize their vision. However, the truly transformational leader is not only committed to helping the organization achieve its goals. They have a revealed intention to help followers or group members to fulfill their own potential and maximize their own contribution. Burns (1978) defines transformational leadership as occurring "when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 20). As such, transformational leaders seek to develop group members or followers to higher "leadership" levels. The ability to influence and inspire requires visionary skills, strong communication, example-setting, empathy (care for and interest in others), and emotional intelligence.

Many other leadership styles have been discussed and advanced since these early contributions to leadership theory. Here we pay attention to a few additional styles of leadership recently popularized for their suitability to complex and/or dynamic organizational settings.

Visionary Leadership- Visionary leadership is characterized by an individual or group of individuals capturing and inspiring others with a clear and authoritative vision of how things could be. The style places "visioning" and the task of selling that vision at the very heart of the leader's role. The visionary leader is required to both share and communicate that vision and to ensure that the organization's strategies and structure are set up to help realize it. According to Goleman (2000), the visionary style ismost effective when a new vision or clear direction is needed or objectified. In this regard, there is a close affiliation between this leadership style and the transformational style previously discussed. A key skill of the visionary leader is to inspire and motivate individuals by focusing their attention on the long‑term goals of the organization; and how each person can play their part in realizing that vision.

Decentralized Leadership - With some parallel to the democratic leadership style of Lewin, decentralized leadership focuses on delegation and the sharing of decision-making authority. Responsibilities and decision-making powers are distributed among different individuals or teams. As such, decentralized leadership is a consultative and inclusive leadership approach and one at distance from the idea of the leader as somebody who exercises power over others or as somebody taking all of the key decisions. As an approach or model, it places an emphasis on leadership as a shared experience and responsibility and promotes a culture of participation and distributed authority. *Shared Leadership* (Yukl, 2006), in which leaders delegate and promote a culture of joint participation and responsibility, is very much a sister concept or approach.

Inclusive Leadership - Inclusive Leadership is a distinctive "diversity management approach" where

the focus is on fostering an environment where every voice is heard, every perspective is valued, and every individual feels a sense of place and belonging (Korkmaz et al, 2022). With a strong echo of the participative, democratic, and decentralized leadership styles, inclusive leadership places a premium on engagement, mutual responsibility, and connection between the leader and all stakeholders. Differentiation follows through the central objective to unleash everybody's potential and to respond to challenges through the ability to make everybody feel at home and of value. Korkmaz et al. (2022) propose four dimensions, namely fostering employee's uniqueness, strengthening belonging within a team, showing appreciation, and supporting organizational efforts to maximize and prioritize inclusion.

Servant Leadership - A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first, and helps people develop and perform as well as possible (Greenleaf, 1970). They see themselves as being in service to those with whom they work and believe that by developing those to whom they are in service, they can best serve organizational and societal objectives. As an approach or model, it places an emphasis on leadership as a shared experience linked to shared purpose or intentionality.

Resonant Leadership - According to Boyatzis (2012) "resonant leaders are able to build trusting, engaged, and energizing relationships with others around them". They establish strong emotional connections that then function as a form of "social glue". The notion of resonance rests with the leader's capacity to build an environment that resonates with the emotions of the team members. Resonant leadership encourages leaders to be open, authentic, and mindful of their own emotions and the emotions of others. The leader is expected to resonate with the emotions of those around him and be authentic in terms of showing and sharing their own feelings. Qualities such as openness, emotional intelligence, empathy, and compassion are deemed to be central to the make-up of the resonant leader. The aim of the resonant leader is to create a space and culture in which trust, mutual respect and emotional connection are hallmark. This places a high value on empathy and attunement to people's feelings. For these reasons, empathetic or compassionate leadership represents a similar type or style.

3.2 Leadership as Contingent or Situational

Section 3.1 provides a summary of different leadership styles and their competing qualities. This is by no means an exhaustive list of leadership styles but gives us some account of the many different styles of leadership. These different styles of leadership all have advantages and disadvantages which are well documented in a sizable literature providing overview and evaluation. Each amount to a process by which a leader attempts to reach personal and organizational goals by engaging others in their pursuit.

In a contingent or situational view of leadership, these different styles are seen as being deployable in different settings or under specific conditions (see Section 3.3). Different contexts or situations may make certain styles more or less effective and not just the leader. Of course, none of this means that a leader cannot have a default or primary style of leadership and specific settings may make certain styles more or less effective. The idea that leadership requires adaptation and choice is significant and amounts to a rejection of a 'one size fits all' stance or approach. Contingent or situational leadership is not another leadership style per se but more a view or perspective that situational diagnosis and sensitivity can and should prompt the adoption of, or movement between, different leadership styles and behaviours. This can also manifest in a blend of styles or approaches.

Daniel Goleman (2000) puts this in the following terms:

"[T]he most effective executives use a collection of distinct leadership styles—each in the right measure, at just the right time. Such flexibility is tough to put into action, but it pays off in performance."

Having identified six distinctive leadership styles - *coercive, visionary (authoritative), pacesetting, affiliative, democratic, and coaching* - Goleman, clarifies that each should be used situationally to provide leadership based on situational judgment and emotional intelligence. For Goleman, different leadership styles should be used to a different extent depending on the situation. As a rule, pacesetting and coercive (commanding) leadership should be used sparingly, and the visionary), democratic, affiliative, and coaching styles to a larger degree. We will return to this idea as we discuss leadership andtransformation in the HE context.

3.3. Leadership and Transformation in HE

3.3.1. High potential leadership styles

Given the scope and scale of the transformation agenda in higher education, it would be reasonable to assume that the transformational leadership style would be a good fit. Transformational leadership is directed towards change and change management. Equally, "transformational leadership has as a differentiating characteristic, the consideration and concern for subordinates, inspiring them to adopt a collection vision, improving both individual and organizational performance" (Carvalho et al., 2022). In short, the team is carried and inspired towards the end goal that characterizes the vision. The four transformational leadership constructs - idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration - either meet employee's needs directly or help followers rise to the challenge of meeting the leader's goals (Bass & Bass, 2008). Their suitability to the HE space is not fully tested but there is evident potential to inspire and motivate through this style of leadership.

The same assertion is possible for the so-called visionary style of leadership. The visionary style is perhaps at its most effective when a new direction is needed, e.g. when in a period of change. In such a scenario, teams can be bound and motivated by a shared sense of purpose or shared vision, which comes from a leader or group of leaders. Without it, they may lack cohesion and/or focus on specific measurable goals or task completion linked to autonomous roles and self-identity. Again, this puts the premium on the capacity of the leader to develop and transmit a compelling vision of some future state (see Testimonial #2).

Decentralized or shared leadership approaches are a clear and popular option in HE in the sense that they are collaborative and allow for diverse perspectives and ideas to have voice and impact in a more bottom-up approach. HE spaces are blessed with knowledge and expertise throughout their structure. A decentralized model of decision-making encourages people to come up with new ideas and solutions and channel them into organizational decision-making. They can also give policy and key decisions greater legitimacy as shared or negotiated outcomes (see Testimonial #2).

Testimonial #2, Head of Department (Belgium)

As the academic world is subject to all kinds of pressures (funding, massification et al.), academic management and leadership needs to deal with this increasing complexity. Hence, leadership should be distributed over many people because it requires many insights to pick the right solutions or paths for advancement, and to build legitimacy into the decision-making process.

Of course, this type of leadership can lead to lowest-common -denominator results as well as to slower decision-making. Nonetheless, empowering people and leveraging collective intelligence are

obvious benefits. What may be less clear is how precisely this style of leadership (and structure) can be fused with a more visionary "leader-led" approach. Focus group participants commonly objectify this combination of visionary and democratic leadership (see Testimonial #3 as an example).

> **Testimonial #3, Head of Department (Belgium)**
>
> **The leadership styles that can fit best the HE environment are, for me, the combination of "visionary" and "democratic" leaders: visionary, because is essential for a successful higher education leader to formulate and implement a vision for the institution; and democratic, because a leader has to ensure clear decision-making from the top but also, and very important, create an environment that allows for bottom-up approaches, empowering people of their teams.**

Given the organizational culture of universities, effective leadership styles are likely to be those that place a premium on respect for others/followers and their autonomy. The literature on knowledge communities and knowledge-workers points to high levels of self-motivation within the workforce and a strong preference for autonomy. This characteristic can have significant influence on organizational design and culture, pointing to the need for leadership models and styles that resist control and emphasize mutual respect, autonomy, and collaboration. In broad terms, this is supported by the testimonials of our focus group participants. What is for certain is that the HE community is addressing complex challenges that require collaborative, inter-functional and interdisciplinary co-operation. Deeper levels of engagement and collaboration are a prerequisite for effective and coordinated action.

In similar fashion, the fact that HE leaders work with and respond to a particularly broad range of stakeholders, may privilege those leadership styles that emphasize comprehensive engagement and inclusion. Inclusive leadership has gained in popularity as a leadership style since its focus is on giving a heterogeneous set of actors a sense of place and belonging within our institutions. The mission is to give everybody a sense of place and to have "all voices heard in the transformations higher education is facing" (Schiltman & Davies, 2023).

Randel et al. (2018) conceptualize inclusive leadership as leadership with a focus on shared decision-making opportunities in a context of diversity and belonging. This is an approach that has popularity amongst HE leaders, who often see it in terms of moral obligation as well as a source of team building, motivation, and creativity. Beyond this, inclusive leadership in higher education is vital because it acknowledges the unique role of this sector as both a symbol of and catalyst for EDI and positive societal change (see Testimonial #4).

> **Testimonial #4, Executive Dean (France)**
>
> **As leaders in higher education, we must lead by example, creating spaces that embrace diversity, nurturing dialogue that encourages understanding, and fostering an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive. By embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion, educational leaders pave the way for higher performance by enabling employees to have a full sense of place and belonging. Through a focus on inclusion, educational leaders also pave the way for a generation of empathetic and socially conscious leaders. They instill values that transcend the classroom, empowering students to become agents of positive transformation in their communities and beyond.**

Today's HE leaders face unprecedented challenges in an era of VUCA made more complex by shifting political, economic, socio-demographic, and environmental realities and rapidly evolving technological transformation. As recipients of public funds and as social institutions, HEIs have an obligation to lead and act in the furtherance of the societal good. It is here that notions of service are relevant and where the concept of servant leadership reappears. Servant leaders see themselves as in service to their people and communities. Indeed, the concept of organizational stewardship rests with a desire to leave a positive legacy in the organization and society.

It is however the tendency of the servant leader to focus on people-building that makes this form of leadership especially relevant. Servant leadership has been theorized to include a fundamental desire to serve others and meet their needs, as well as to create psychological safety. In one of the few studies addressing leadership styles in higher education, Sims, Carter and De Paralta (2021) remark that: "both servant leadership and transformational leadership emphasize the importance of appreciating and valuing people, listening, mentoring or teaching and empowering followers".

Resonant leadership places a similar stress on inclusion and the empowerment of followers. Here though, the leader is focused on emotional exchange to bind and affiliate team members. The construction of emotional ties and sensitivity to people's emotions are used to bring people together to deliver sustained changes at team/organizational level. Using elements of these leadership skills can help leaders to be more in tune with the emotions of their followers and to be more fully bonded with them. This can be especially valuable at times of disruption or disturbance. NEWLEAD focus group participants spoke frequently of the importance of empathetic and compassionate leadership, which is in tune with the emotional sensitivity that is the imprint of resonant leadership (see Testimonial #5 as an example).

> **Testimonial #5, Managing Director (United Kingdom)**
>
> **As HE is mainly about people, our staff and students, their wellbeing is paramount. Having a leadership approach that aims to actively listen to, understand, and empathize with our staff and students will benefit the whole institution and sector. It would enable those we lead to feel valued, respected and cared for, so they can reach their potential and do their best work. Compassionate leadership has the potential to create staff and student engagement and motivation with high levels of wellbeing…Our leaders need to be able to make complex financial decisions due to current financial pressures. Remaining compassionate in this context is a challenge for many.**

The laissez-faire style of leadership (LFL) has had a traditional role and place in academia, reflecting the fact that faculty typically enjoy autonomy in terms of their research and scholarly activity. Indeed, certain studies have evidenced the positive effects of LFL on the performance of university faculty in public sector universities (e.g., Owani, Ogwang & Mwesigwa, 2020). Despite this, the potential for dissonance between individual faculty agendas and institutional agendas, and the sense of benign neglect that can characterize faculty and staff when leaders are felt to be absent or disengaged, is an evident risk. This takes us back to the essential paradox of LFL, which is something commented upon by focus group participants (see Testimonial #6 as an example).

> **Testimonial #6, Head of Department (Belgium)**
>
> **Leadership in HE is still unique because of the academic staff category. Because their intellectual endeavours enjoy a great degree of freedom, no other sector really compares to HE. A laissez-faire leadership style may have fit here however the pressure on academics to be somewhat market relevant and aligned with institutional strategy is starting to limit that freedom. I'm still undecided whether I feel that this is really a good thing. Rather the opposite, I think.**

3.3.2. Situational leadership

It appears therefore that a range of leadership styles may have their place in the HE space. The reader would be forgiven for thinking that "a little bit of this and a little bit of that" might be the only way through the challenges of HE leadership at a time of change and transformation. Whilst each leadership style has its strengths, the broad conclusion is that those with a more directive or controlling quality such as the autocratic and transactional leadership styles have relatively lower appeal and effectiveness in an HE environment characterized by high levels of autonomy.

Command-and-control approaches do not align with the organizational culture of universities and should be used sparingly or exceptionally. By contrast, those leadership styles that promote engagement, service, collaboration and inclusion, especially where directed to shared purpose or intentionality, have potential fit and efficacy. Transformational leadership - with its visionary element - seems particularly well geared to promoting and/or responding to the wave of challenges hitting and preoccupying HE institutions. Laissez-faire leadership can fit the academic culture but may contribute to strategic drift at a time when institutions are facing pressures to align strategy and investment.

Of course, the contingency model of leadership suggests that different leadership styles fit different situations, purposes, people, and cultures. This means that effective leaders may frequently move or switch between different leadership styles, often in an agile fashion.

Testimonies from focus group participants (see Testimonials #7 and #8) underscore the situational and pragmatic character of leadership in HE alongside the leaning towards more transformational and collaborative leadership styles.

Testimonial #7, Vice Rector (Croatia)

I believe that in higher education, different leadership styles can be effective depending on the specific context and objectives. I think that a good combination of transformational, collaborative, and decentralized leadership styles could be effective. Transformational leadership aims to inspire and motivate staff to achieve exceptional results by encouraging creativity, innovation and personal growth, which in turn fosters a culture of continuous improvement. On the other hand, collaborative leadership is essential in the complex and interdisciplinary world of higher education. It relies on consensus, promotes open communication and involves stakeholders in decision-making processes. No less important is decentralized leadership, where responsibilities are distributed among different individuals or teams. This allows for decentralized decision-making, enabling those closest to the issue to make informed decisions, while fostering a sense of ownership and accountability. For certain, today's HE requires adaptable leaders who are able to navigate a complex and fast-changing environment where the landscape is changing rapidly due to technological advances, student demographics, and societal change.

Testimonial #8, Head of School and DVC (Sweden)

I believe that there is no best one-size-fits-all leadership style for Higher Education. The leadership needs to be situational and adopted to the situation and context. Delegation and trust are important to stimulate and foster academic creativity.

3.4 Conclusions

Given the rapid and intense change taking place in our societies and universities, institutional leadership has become a key factor in our ability to adapt. There is a need for HEI leaders and leadership teams to implement effective leadership styles to better handle the extensive changes characterizing the HE landscape and to shape high impact responses. Our analysis has highlighted the scope and scale of these changes. Broad conclusions have been drawn by the authors based on ten (10) detailed leadership styles:

1. Authoritative *(autocratic)*
2. Participative (*democratic*)
3. Delegative *(laissez-faire)*
4. Transactional
5. Transformational
6. Visionary
7. Decentralized *(shared)*
8. Inclusive
9. Servant
10. Resonant

Clearly there are a higher number of leadership styles than are examined here and this should be held in mind by the reader. One study alone (Carvalho et al. 2022) identifies no fewer than 26 different leadership styles in relation to HEIs and their leadership of digital transformation. A systematic review of the literature is recommended for those with deeper interest in this topic.

Our central observations are as follows:

- HE transformation is broad and deep. The question of leadership in HE is bound to the task and challenge of managing these transformations (financial, digital, societal, ecological et al.). Leadership models and styles must reflect the demands of the transformation processes at play.

- There is a lack of knowledge on the relationship between leadership styles and HEI' transformation processes and only a small body of research exists. Richer empirical study is required.

- HE leadership has a certain specificity, linked to the unique character of our institutions and the extent to which institutional strategies bridge academic, financial, and societal missions.

- HE leaders must demonstrate the ability to navigate a variety of challenges and must work with an array of stakeholders internal and external to the institution. Faculty are a part of this mix and present a special case given their autonomy and commitment to academic freedom.

- In higher education, decision-making has the potential to involve multiple stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, alumni, etc. Leadership styles will determine the form and extent of engagement and participation.

- A range of leadership styles have their place in the HE space and these are not mutually exclusive.

- Command-and-control approaches do not readily align with the organizational culture of universities and should be used sparingly or exceptionally.

- Leadership styles that are participative and which promote engagement, collaboration and inclusion have potential fit and efficacy. This is most powerfully the case where directed towards a shared purpose or intentionality.

- Transformational leadership seems especially geared to promoting and/or responding to the wave of challenges hitting and preoccupying HE institutions. Its mix of vision and motivation can prove effective where change is sought and prioritized.

- The concepts of servant and inclusive leadership have a clear relevance to HEIs. Both place a focus on people, their growth and contribution. Both see people as the driver of positive change and impact.

- Resonant leadership can play a useful role in the context of disruption and where people experience uncertainty or disjuncture. Resonant leadership can provide support and motivation through a focus on emotional openness and sharing.

- Different leadership styles fit different situations, purposes, people, and cultures.

- Although leaders may have preferred styles or character, effective leaders will often move or switch between different leadership styles.

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