Developing Collective Leadership in Higher Education

Final Report

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report presents the findings from an 18-month, Leadership Foundation funded, research project on collective leadership in UK Higher Education and its development. The overall aim of this project was to develop recommendations on how leadership and leadership development could be enhanced, particularly in terms of encouraging collective engagement with the leadership process. In order to do this we: (a) explored what is understood by the term 'leadership' by various institutional actors; (b) investigated the processes by which leadership is distributed at different levels within universities (i.e. school, faculty, executive group, etc.); and (c) examined the way(s) in which leadership development (in its broadest sense) contributes towards improved leadership capability for individuals, groups and the wider organisation.

2. In scoping the project we drew principally on three sources: (1) general literature on the impact of management and leadership development on performance, (2) current theorising, debate and research on the nature of collective or 'distributed' leadership and (3) existing research on leadership and leadership development in higher education. Each source highlighted the significance of the wider context in which leadership and leadership development takes place, as opposed to focusing solely on the traits and capabilities of individual 'leaders'. Thus integration, embeddedness and collective engagement are argued to be central to the effectiveness of leadership within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) even though they remain absent within many formal leadership development interventions (still targeted at individuals in formal roles).

3. The key focus of this research was on the leadership of the academic work of universities (particularly teaching and research) and an exploration of how strategic direction emerges and is negotiated between varying actors within and beyond the institution.

4. The primary method of data collection for this study was in-depth interviews with 152 leaders/managers from 12 UK HEIs. Institutions were selected to offer a broad cross section of universities on the basis of geographic location, type, size, disciplinary mix and ranking. Interviewees included senior university managers (at Vice-Chancellor/Principal Executive Group level), middle manager-academics (at faculty, school and department level), and professional managers and administrators. Interview data was supplemented by a literature review, institutional documentation and two collaborative workshops with staff development professionals in participating institutions.

5. Findings are presented under five sections as addressed in the interviews: (1) structural/organisational approaches to leadership ('leadership strategies and approaches'); (2) individual motivations, perceptions and experiences ('taking up a leadership role'); (3) the social and collective aspects of leadership ('sharing leadership'); (4) the context and changing shape of higher education ('future trends and challenges'); and (5) the role of, and implications for, leadership development.

6. At a structural/organisational level it was noted that all universities in our sample have undergone substantial restructuring within the last five years, including the rationalisation of organisational structures including faculties, schools and departments; committees; professional and support services and the Senior Management Group. Invariably, this has been conducted with the intent of flattening organisational hierarchies and devolving greater strategic and operational autonomy to academic faculties, schools and/or departments. These trends have been accompanied by the expansion, merging, and occasionally closure, of schools and departments to create larger ‘business units’ reporting directly to senior university management, primarily in response to market and political pressures demanding a greater commercial orientation from universities.

7. Our findings reveal two main approaches to the devolution of managerial responsibility according to the level to which budget and line management responsibilities are allocated. Eight out of the 12 universities in our sample devolve primary responsibility to the faculty/school level, whilst the remaining four devolve this to the next level down (i.e. schools/departments). In the latter case the faculty (or equivalent) level becomes fundamentally a forum for facilitating horizontal communication and collaboration between departments/schools.

8. Whatever the structure, we identify a number of different kinds of leadership role within the institution, including those with formal line and budget management control which have a primarily vertical influence within the
institution and those with more cross-cutting roles dependent on interpersonal and social influence which serve a more horizontal function. A further major source of leadership within HEIs is people without formal management roles who, nevertheless, command considerable respect and influence through their academic and/or professional credentials within and beyond the institution.

9. People in all of the institutions recognised the need to align and connect top-down and bottom-up leadership and management approaches as well as ensuring effective cross organisational communication and connection; however, this was recognised as a difficult balance and in each case gave rise to specific challenges and difficulties. In institutions where a predominantly ‘managerial’ or top-down approach to leadership dominates, senior university managers may be perceived, at the school/department level, to be micro-managing and interfering unnecessarily in academic affairs. By contrast, interviewees in universities with highly devolved decision-making structures frequently expressed a desire for stronger direction and greater clarity of organisational priorities to help guide their activities.

10. In addition to the formally recognised channels for communication and influence within universities our findings highlight the importance of informal networks and relationships. This ‘social capital’ is integral to the manner in which leadership and management are enacted across the organisation and contributes strongly to a shared sense of engagement, ownership, purpose and identity. Despite its significance, however, this dimension of organisational functioning may well be neglected and can lead to dysfunction and confusion in the exercise of roles and responsibilities.

11. With regard to the leadership of functions/services (such as HR, Estates, Finance and IT) our findings indicate a trend towards the ‘professionalisation’ of these services to render them more commercially orientated and customer focused. Associated with this trend, is a tendency to decentralise services such as HR into schools and faculties and to provide professional managers to assist Deans and Heads in the day-to-day operation of their academic units. This shift is leading to a blurring of the traditional ‘academic-administrative’ divide and the evolution of a more ‘hybrid’ approach.

12. Overall, our findings point towards an increasing professionalisation of leadership and management. These trends are associated with a gradual shift away from predominantly ‘bureaucratic’ and ‘collegial’ forms of organisation towards more ‘corporate’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ approaches.

13. At an individual level our findings reveal a range of motivations, barriers and incentives for taking on formal leadership and management roles within UK higher education. Whilst these broadly map onto Deem’s (2001) three tracks (career-route, reluctant-manager and ‘good citizen’) the situation is inevitably more complex, with individual motivations changing over time and often operating in tension with one another. Overall, however, our findings indicate an increasing tendency towards the pursuit of academic leadership as a recognised and desirable career path and a tendency for academic leaders to choose to remain in such roles after their initial term in office.

14. Middle-level leadership and management roles such as Head of School/Department are no longer seen as purely ‘operational’ or ‘administrative’ and have evolved into something more strategic and empowering. Such posts are now usually associated with substantial managerial responsibility (in terms of finances, resources and influence) and are better supported (in terms of administrative expertise and ongoing development). Despite this, however, filling these posts has reportedly become more difficult for a number of reasons, including: the necessity of getting the right person rather than just someone willing to do the job; the need for relevant prior experience; the detrimental effect on research profile; and unfavourable organisational systems and processes (e.g. for career progression, influence at a senior level and/or performance appraisal).

15. Recruiting to more senior levels such as PVC/DVC and Dean of Faculty/school was generally not regarded as so challenging. Whilst many leaders at this level have progressed internally within the institution there is a tendency nowadays to advertise such posts externally and hold an open recruitment competition. Senior leadership roles such as this are likely to be more appealing than that of Head of School/Department because they can be clearly constituted as career progression and may even be regarded as easier roles to perform (with the exception of VC/Principal). There is generally less conflict of interests than at the middle level, sitting clearly within the university management structure with responsibility for a wide range of

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McKay, I., (1995)
disciplines (thus reducing emotional commitment to colleagues within the same subject area), and more significant financial reward. There is also less likely to be a conflict with research activities as leaders at this level are likely to have reached the pinnacle of their research career and either maintain it or divert their attention to the support/facilitation of other peoples' research.

16. In terms of recruitment to academic management/leadership roles, whilst ‘research excellence’ (and a willingness to do the job) was traditionally the primary factor taken into consideration (particularly within ‘old’, research-intensive universities) the criteria are now being extended to take greater consideration of management and leadership experience and potential and to view ‘academic credibility’ within a broader context than just research. Thus, candidates are now likely to be considered on a range of factors, including credibility (to peers and colleagues within and beyond the institution), capability (including operational and strategic management experience), character (particularly integrity, distinctiveness, inter-personal skills and personal style) and career tactics (ambition and desire to progress, political skills, self-management and ability to proactively manage change).

17. With regards to the social dimensions of leadership in higher education, especially the shared/distributed nature of this type of work, a number of findings were identified. Amongst all interviewees there was a sense that leadership was in some way distributed, with both strategic and operational responsibility and influence being taken at all levels. The majority of interviewees considered that distributed leadership was not just conceivable within the higher education context, but a necessity – that it is a function that is too complex and important to leave to a small group of individuals in formal roles.

18. Despite this, however, analysis of responses revealed a number of variations in the way in which distributed leadership was being conceived. These classifications broadly match MacBeath et al’s (2004) typology of formal, pragmatic, strategic, incremental, opportunistic and cultural forms of leadership. The form adopted is influenced by a range of factors, perhaps the most significant of which is financial control, with greater power and influence afforded to schools/departments with direct control of budgets and resources. Our findings distinguish between two principal concepts of distributed leadership: firstly as formally delegated to specific individuals and groups (top-down influence) and secondly as informally dispersed across the organisation (bottom-up and horizontal influence).

19. Benefits attributed to a distributed approach to leadership included: responsiveness, transparency, convenience and teamwork. Disadvantages may include: fragmentation, lack of role clarity, slow decision-making and variations in individual capability. Accounts of how leadership practice actually occurs within universities included descriptions of dislocation, disconnection, disengagement, dissipation, distance and dysfunctionality – together these provide a vivid image of the difficulties in balancing top-down, bottom-up and horizontal leadership within universities.

20. Alongside distributed leadership, however, there is also a clear desire for strong and inspiring leadership from individuals in key roles. This can help give a sense of common purpose and direction, engender a sense of trust and openness, encourage communication and dialogue and create an innovative and supportive culture in which initiatives can flourish. Thus, distributed (or dispersed) leadership is not regarded as a successor to traditional hierarchical leadership but rather complements and enhances it. The evidence from our research implies that effective university leadership requires a combination of both individual and collective leadership – what Collinson and Collinson label “blended leadership”.

21. In terms of the changing context of higher education, our findings indicate an increasing marketisation of the sector, driven by political and market pressures and associated with broadening of the student demographic, increasing customer focus, professionalisation of services, greater political engagement, differentiation of research orientation, internationalisation and regionalisation, interdisciplinarity and vocationalisation.

22. Universities are responding to these challenges in a variety ways, including optimising opportunities from location, strategically reviewing disciplinary mix, creating strategic alliances with other HEIs, developing commercial alliances, and establishing additional campuses both within and outside the UK. Key development challenges include: encouraging diversity, succession planning, career routes, hybrid management, balancing competing priorities, integration with organisational systems, and management of the university brand and reputation.

23. Despite variations between each of the sample institutions in terms of structure, approach, strategic priorities, etc. our impression was that overall, the similarities outweighed the differences. Of the differences that did appear significant, a key one was the distinction between ‘old’ (pre-1992) and ‘new’ (post-1992) universities. In our sample, this difference was not only associated with a difference in organisational legacy and structure but often linked to research orientation. Thus, the ‘old’ universities in our sample placed a high importance on traditional academic research and regarded it as of paramount strategic importance, whereas this was not as evident in the ‘new’ universities, enabling them to focus more on the student experience and community/business engagement (including applied research). Overall, we perceived a greater acceptance of ‘managerialism’ (or the need for top-down management) within ‘new’ than ‘old’ universities which still showed a preference for ‘collegiality’ (or consensual decision-making).

24. With regards to leadership development, senior leaders within the sample universities clearly see this as an area of high priority and recognise its vital role in the long-term future and success of their organisations. This is also evidenced by the fact that the majority of institutions are either developing or have developed a clear policy framework to guide the institutional strategy and approach to leadership development.

25. In terms of provision, there is a general trend from generic centrally-delivered programmes to bespoke/tailored leadership development for all levels. There is a tendency to view leadership development as an ongoing process of relevance to all staff and to invest more in the development of both existing leaders (at the middle and senior levels) as well as potential and future leaders (at a more junior level). Thus, whilst development was typically provided to managers after they had taken on a formal role, there is a move towards offering development prior to assuming roles and responsibilities and on an ongoing basis from then on.

26. In addition to formal programmes there is increasing investment in more personalised support such as mentoring, coaching, development centres and job shadowing. This can be particularly useful in helping people decide whether or not to apply for and progress to formal leadership roles and can also assist in the development of skills and experience relevant to the job.

27. Emerging priorities for development include: sustainability of finances and resources, integration with HR processes (such as the Performance and Development Review (PDR) mechanism), succession planning (especially for junior and middle-level roles), partnerships and collaborations, continuing development, programme accreditation, career progression structures and performance management.

28. In the discussion, it is proposed that successful university leadership requires the dynamic interplay between a range of factors and priorities at a number of levels: individual, social, structural/organisational, contextual and developmental. With regards to the notion of ‘distributed leadership’ it is argued that its utility as a concept is perhaps more valuable in rhetorical than descriptive terms – thus distributed leadership offers a new language (and perspective) with which to discuss opportunities for collective engagement in institutional leadership and management even if the actual execution of such activities remains relatively unchanged.

29. The report finishes with a series of conclusions and recommendations for higher education leaders, leadership developers and policy makers, grouped by theme (structural/organisational, individual, social, contextual and developmental) as well as further avenues for research.
2. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings from an 18-month, Leadership Foundation-funded, research project on collective leadership in UK higher education and its development.

2.1 Background

Higher education in the UK is undergoing a major transition. Changing funding mechanisms, regulation and audit, increasing customer demands, competition and internationalisation are all parts of the shifting landscape. Combined with a need to deliver high quality teaching and research and engage more actively with business and community it is, perhaps, unsurprising that ‘good leadership’ is increasingly espoused as a strategic and operational imperative within the sector. The structure and nature of higher education institutions (HEIs), however, is not generally well suited to top-down leadership or ‘managerialism’. There remains a deep-seated desire for collegiality, consultation and academic freedom. In such a context, where universities must steer an uncertain path through competing and conflicting demands and expectations, how can they offer a sense of continuity, motivate staff to work towards shared goals and mobilise leadership throughout the organisation rather than just from senior figures?

Partly in response to these challenges the higher education sector is increasingly espousing the practice of ‘distributed leadership’ whereby the leadership process is conceived of as dispersed across the organisation (within systems and relationships) rather than residing within the individual traits and capabilities of formally-recognised ‘leaders’. Despite having embraced this concept, however, it is still not clear what is actually distributed (in terms of power and accountability), the processes by which it is distributed and whether the concept itself offers substantial benefits for either practice, analysis or policy-making.

In this report we present findings from a Leadership Foundation-funded research project that explores the manner in which leadership is perceived and enacted at different levels in UK universities. We will explore whether the concept of ‘distributed leadership’ offers a useful framework for understanding the nature of leadership within such organisations and will reveal some of the tensions and paradoxes faced when leading in HEIs.

Our findings reveal a wide range of factors associated with leadership in UK higher education, including individual motivations and aspirations, organisational structures and processes, and the ‘social fabric’ (including culture, relationships and interactions) within and beyond institutions. Each of these holds implications for the development and support of existing and future leaders, and discussion of this forms a substantial part of this report.

The report finishes with a discussion section, followed by a series of conclusions and recommendations, which should assist those responsible for leadership and leadership development in universities in identifying policies and practices suited to the changing and future face of UK higher education.

2.2 Research aims and objectives

This research was proposed in response to a call to tender from the Leadership Foundation in 2005, looking to enhance the empirical evidence base for leadership and leadership development practice in UK higher education. Following a rigorous review process, this project was selected alongside 12 others, covering a wide range of issues of relevance to leadership, management and governance in UK HEIs.

In framing the project we drew principally on three sources: (1) general literature on the impact of management and leadership development on performance, (2) current theorising, debate and research on the nature of collective or ‘distributed’ leadership and (3) existing research on leadership and leadership development in higher education. Each source highlighted the significance of the wider context in which leadership and leadership development take place, as opposed to focusing solely on the traits and capabilities of individual ‘leaders’. Thus integration, embeddedness and collective engagement are argued to be central to the effectiveness of leadership within HEIs yet frequently remain absent within formal leadership development interventions.

The current project contributes towards the evidence base for leadership development in the sector by carefully exploring the processes by which leadership development may lead to enhanced organisational capability. The research aimed to identify those organisational systems and processes (such as career and reward structures, integration with HRM strategy) and individual motivations to adopt leadership and management responsibilities that support and/or enhance the effectiveness of leadership within higher education. One of the intentions of this work, therefore, is to reveal insights into how the precision of leadership development in higher education can be enhanced, and the creation of more appropriate forms of leadership development and support for the sector.

3 Hefce (2004)
5 Visit www.lfhe.ac.uk/research/projects/ for further details of the Leadership Foundation research portfolio
In doing this work we inevitably spent considerable time looking at the manner in which leadership is conducted across differing HEIs and hence many of our findings and implications are broader than simply ‘leadership development’, at least in its formal sense. Thus the overall aims can be extended to the following:

- Explore what is understood by the term ‘leadership’ by various institutional actors
- Investigate the processes by which leadership is distributed at different levels within universities (i.e. department, school, faculty, executive group, etc.)
- Discover the way(s) in which leadership development (in its broadest sense) contributes towards enhancement of leadership capability for individuals, groups and the wider organisation

The key focus of this research was on the leadership of the academic work of universities (teaching, research and ‘third stream’ activities). Within this, we especially focused on leadership at the school/department level as this is the main operational unit of universities, the primary source of future senior academic leaders, and the main point of interface between leadership of the institution and leadership of the academic discipline. We were interested both in how leadership is experienced at this level and how it interacts with other parts of the organisation. Notably we were keen to explore how strategic direction emerges and is negotiated between varying actors within and beyond the institution.

2.3 Structure of this report

This report is intended to be accessible to practicing managers and leaders in higher education. It draws together findings from the Interim Report and subsequent analyses to provide a comprehensive overview of project findings and their implications for leadership and leadership development practice. Whilst theoretical concepts are discussed, our focus, in this report, is primarily on their practical implications. A number of more elaborate, theoretically-orientated papers are being produced for academic and specialist audiences.

Following this introduction, a brief literature review and overview of the methodology are given. The majority of this report presents research findings as outlined below:

- Leadership strategies and approach
- Taking up a leadership role
- Sharing leadership
- Future trends and challenges
- Leadership development

These sections broadly map onto the conceptual diagram in Figure 2.1 and coincide with the structure of the interview schedule. Thus, there is a section on organisational approaches to leadership (‘leadership strategies and approaches’); individual motivations, perceptions and experiences (‘taking up a leadership role’); the social and collective aspects of leadership (‘sharing leadership’); the context and changing shape of higher education (‘future trends and challenges’); and the role of, and implications for, leadership development.

The discussion section builds on from the findings to indicate the principal factors associated with leadership and leadership development practice in higher education. The report finishes with a series of conclusions and recommendations for policy makers, universities and individual leaders.
3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent years have seen burgeoning calls and directives for improved university leadership. Like the rest of the education sector (schools and further education) the majority of research on leadership and management in higher education concludes that leadership in HEIs is widely distributed or should be distributed across the institution. Despite this, however, the actual processes and mechanisms by which leadership is distributed and the implications for leadership practice and development in universities have received relatively little attention.

3.1 Governance, management and leadership in higher education

The concept of governance is fairly well documented within higher education. Governance is generally taken to refer to organisational responses to legislation, regulation and accountability and, over time, has become synonymous with a governing body and how it conducts its business (rather than with the roles played by Senates, academic boards, etc.). The governing body is held ultimately accountable for the affairs of the institution and for ensuring that public funds received by an institution are used only in accordance with legislation, for delivering value for public money and for approving institutional strategic and financial plans. Although associated with the themes of this research, university governance is not a key focus of our work, but does form the basis of another Leadership Foundation funded project. Our project is concerned with institutional management and leadership.

Unlike governance, management in universities is generally taken to be about the operational implementation of institutional strategies and goals through systematic planning and the effective use of resources. As Tricker claims:

“If management is about running the business, governance is about seeing that it is run properly.”

Leadership, a relatively new concept within the sector, is harder to define. In setting out their strategic plan for the UK higher education sector, Hefce define leadership as:

“Agreeing strategic direction in discussion with others and communicating this within the organisation; ensuring that there is the capability, capacity and resources to deliver planned strategic outcomes; and supporting and monitoring delivery. As such this embraces elements of governance and elements of management.”

Such a definition, however, offers little insight into how leadership is actually enacted in higher education. Furthermore, it neglects the long and heated debate on the nature of leadership that makes it an ‘essentially contested’ concept.

Grint identifies four reasons that make agreement on a common definition of leadership highly unlikely. Firstly, there is the ‘process’ problem – a lack of agreement on whether leadership is derived from the personal qualities (i.e. traits) of the leader, or whether a leader induces followership through what s/he does (i.e. a social process). Secondly, there is the ‘position’ problem – is the leader in charge (i.e. with formally allocated authority) or in front (i.e. with informal influence)? A third problem is one of ‘philosophy’ – does the leader exert an intentional, causal influence on the behaviour of followers or are their apparent actions determined by context and situation or even attributed retrospectively? A fourth difficulty is one of ‘purity’ – is leadership embodied in individuals or groups and is it a purely human phenomenon? From Grint’s perspective, accounts of effective leadership are more likely the consequence of rhetoric – the ability to construct and communicate a convincing and influential argument/story – than who leaders are and/or what they do.

Despite this, a number of authors have endeavoured to identify the common ground amongst leadership definitions. Northouse, for example, concludes that leadership tends to be considered as:

“… a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.”

Yukl reaches a similar conclusion, whilst acknowledging the possibility of leadership by groups as well as individuals and the role of leadership in structuring activities:

“Most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person [or group] over other people [or groups] to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organisation.”

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7 e.g. Middlehurst, R. (1993); Knight, P.T. and Trowler, P.R. (2001)
10 See David Llewellym’s project on the Role and Influence of the University Secretary (www.lfhe.ac.uk/research/projects)
This quote offers an acceptable definition of leadership for the purposes of this report, whilst leaving sufficient flexibility of application.

Without doubt there is considerable overlap between the construct of ‘leadership’ and notions of ‘management’ and ‘governance’. Whilst each may give a slightly different emphasis to the work of direction, control and agency within organisations they are inevitably interconnected and interdependent. There is insufficient space in this report to explore the debate about leadership versus management more fully, suffice to say that the authors concur with Mintzberg17 that they are somewhat distinctive yet complementary processes, frequently carried out by the same people. To this extent, we feel that further differentiation is not only unnecessary but also potentially unhelpful.

“The separation of management from leadership is dangerous. Just as management without leadership encourages an uninspired style, which deadens activities, leadership without management encourages a disconnected style, which promotes hubris.”19

It is for this reason that we use the words ‘management’ and ‘leadership’ and ‘manager’ and ‘leader’ largely interchangeably throughout the rest of this report, because in isolation they are impoverished. The notion of ‘governance’ is reserved for the work of senior managers in isolation they are impoverished. The notion of ‘governance’ is reserved for the work of senior managers in relation to fulfilling their legal obligations.

3.2 Universities as organisations

Bargh et al20 argue that the nature of state-university relationships and government regulation shapes patterns of university leadership, governance and management. There are clear differences in the manner in which HEIs respond to these, and other, contextual factors, with the literature on higher education revealing a range of organisational cultures, including ‘collegial’, ‘bureaucratic’, ‘corporate’ and ‘entrepreneurial’.21

Bureaucracy (often referred to as ‘managerialism’) in higher education is traditionally associated with formal hierarchy and authority relations, written governing rules and regulations, prescribed functions, position-based leadership and hierarchical decision making. It can be argued to work well in stable and predominantly centrally controlled higher education systems, but can render a university resistant to change.

Collegiality, by contrast, assumes a ‘first among equals’ style of leadership, authority of professional expertise over positional power, academic autonomy, and self-regulation. Institutional authority within this culture may be perceived as weak and the university viewed more as a ‘holding company’ for the disparate disciplines rather than an integrated whole. Within collegiality, decisions are reached (and frequently evaded) through a consensual process of discussion and debate within university committees. Organisational change, in this context, is assumed to be organically introduced after a process of reasoned discussion amongst institutional actors in professional networks.

With the emergence of a state-regulated market in UK higher education in the 1980s, universities started to move from collegial and bureaucratic organisational cultures towards the corporate organisation. The corporate organisational culture is characterised by authority of the Chief Executive (the Vice-Chancellor (VC) or Principal) and strong institutional management and strategic planning combined with devolution of responsibilities to the lower levels, the promotion of collective identity and loyalty to the institution, a transformational style of leadership, disempowered committees, functional distinction between staff groups, consistency of corporate procedures and administration. In the process of bargaining and negotiation this organisational culture has a strong resemblance to the political perspective advocated by Baldridge in the 1970s, which emphasises the importance of power, the presence of multiple (and competing) coalitions and interest groups and alliances formed outside formal decision arenas.

The apparent differences and tensions between these organisational cultures are made implicit in the so-called entrepreneurial perspective. Its focus is on institutional change, adaptation, flexibility, and the constant interaction of a university with its external environment. Clark22 and Peterson23 propose similar approaches as to how universities can transform themselves through entrepreneurial action; identifying several broad features which, they claim, will

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18 See Bolden, R. (2004) for a review
determine the success of an innovative and adaptive university. Like bureaucratic and collegial culture, however, this is an ‘ideal type’\textsuperscript{30}. No real university is wholly enterprising; but the idea of the ‘entrepreneurial university’ may be a powerful factor in the way institutions are conceived and individuals recognised and rewarded.

These organisational cultures are found to co-exist in most institutional settings, but with different balances amongst them\textsuperscript{31}. Whilst all universities engage with each of these four cultures to a varying extent, many place stronger emphasis on one or two approaches over the others. Bargh \textit{et al.} argue that the balance is largely dependent on institutional mission and history, culture and leadership approach, and emphasise that:

“It is necessary to look for elements of all perspectives… if we are to construct a comprehensive view of governance within specific organisational settings.”\textsuperscript{32}

Table 3.1 summarises the key elements of organisational cultures in universities. From this it can be seen that the different cultures address somewhat different concerns, and that, if taken separately, do not offer a comprehensive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIVERSITY</th>
<th>COLLEGIALLY</th>
<th>BUREAUCRACY</th>
<th>CORPORATION</th>
<th>ENTERPRISE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keywords</td>
<td>Freedom and autonomy</td>
<td>Regulation and rules</td>
<td>Loyalty and consistency</td>
<td>External environment (Market)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational culture (Handy, 1993)</td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of leaders</td>
<td>Professional expertise, ‘first among equals’</td>
<td>Position-based</td>
<td>The Chief Executive</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership style</td>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>Managerial/hierarchical</td>
<td>Transformational (Handy, 1993)</td>
<td>Collective (Clark, 2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making style</td>
<td>Consensual and bottom-up</td>
<td>Formal, regulatory and top-down</td>
<td>‘Steering at a distance’ (planning at the top), strategic and political (negotiations)</td>
<td>Flexible and devolved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision arenas</td>
<td>Committees and community of scholars</td>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Senior Management Team and interest groups</td>
<td>Business units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental ‘fit’</td>
<td>Evolution</td>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>Crisis</td>
<td>Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Organic innovation</td>
<td>Rigidity and resistance to change</td>
<td>Unpredictability and transformation</td>
<td>Adaptability and tactical flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referents</td>
<td>“Invisible college”</td>
<td>Regulatory bodies and rules</td>
<td>Policy makers</td>
<td>Clients, sponsors and stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basis for evaluation</td>
<td>Peer assessment</td>
<td>Audit of procedures</td>
<td>Performance indicators</td>
<td>Satisfaction of consumer and stakeholder demand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{30} Weber, M. (1949)  
\textsuperscript{31} McNay, I. (1995, 1999)  
\textsuperscript{32} Bargh, C. \textit{et al.} (1996) p.34
picture of the increasing complexity of universities as organisations, but nevertheless each sheds light on its nature and dynamics.

Because of the increasing complexity of the higher education sector, the categorisations of university cultures cited above may be overly simplistic to capture the reality of university leadership, governance and management. In the current context, for example, universities have strengthened their professional managerial expertise in order to better respond to external demands brought about by transition to a mass higher education provision, reduced state funding, increased external scrutiny and marketisation, leading scholars to redefine traditional depictions of collegiality.

Middlehurst suggests re-interpreting collegiality in a modern university as the sharing of information, ideas and tasks. Clark, Henkel and Kogan, and Hanney talk about the issue of authority and discern the reinvention of collegiality in a modern university as the joint participation of academics and managers/administrators in decision-making (i.e. as a hybrid of collegiality and bureaucracy/managerialism). Others argue for a flexible model of shared governance and management, which combines both collegial and corporate approaches and takes into account the particular conditions of each institution. In these new interpretations, collegiality becomes dependent on bureaucracy and corporation and is no longer perceived to be free of formal organisational hierarchies. Within institutional decision-making most decisions made by collegia have to be legitimated and translated into systems and procedures by managers/administrators.

This re-interpretation is reminiscent of the political perspective, advocated by Baldridge, as it assumes the existence of several stages of internal decision-making: collegiality (interest articulation), a hybrid of collegiality and bureaucracy (legislative stage), corporation (policy formation). However, in some HEIs there can still be found examples of critical decisions being made in hierarchical and even authoritarian ways; in these cases, differences and tensions in collegia can be subsumed by leadership intervention to achieve institutional control and coordination through subordination. As Miller argues:

“...some senior managers assume that it is sufficient for them to search for solutions and that, once presented, the rest of the academic staff will see the reasonableness, indeed inevitability, of the action proposed and will concur with them.”

Lapworth and Shattock argue that neither a purely top-down nor bottom-up approach works and that institutions work best when leadership and management is seen as a partnership between the corporate and collegial approaches.

Other authors advocate looking at collegiality against a backdrop of the entrepreneurial perspective, brought about by ‘new managerialism’. The entrepreneurial perspective clearly integrates universities within wider public policy reforms that cannot be ignored or underestimated even by institutions that prefer more traditional forms of leadership and management. In this interpretation, collegiality can no longer be seen as a defensive ideology against change, but should instead be geared towards it. Furthermore, the traditional depiction of the entrepreneurial university itself as being responsive, innovative and adaptive has been recently redefined as the ability of a university to respond to change and adapt to the external environment in a business-like way, with attention to the profitability of different activities. Thus, stronger commercial and financial awareness becomes one of the most important characteristics of the entrepreneurial university, as opposed to a merely responsive and adaptive university.

The entrepreneurial model, however, poses a danger to the university as a corporate entity, because it can lead to fragmentation of the institution. Institutional coherence may dissolve as academic units offer their own programmes, and go their own way, and individuals within the departments increasingly respond to market opportunities or become sellers of services rather than members of a specific institution. In this respect, Williams asks what the future holds for the entrepreneurial university, and whether it will be short-lived or durable. Clark argues the opposite: that the entrepreneurial university will become more prominent in the future, because:

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34 Middlehurst, R. (1993)
38 Baldridge, J.V. (1971)
43 Clark, B.R. (2001)
“...[it] maintains continuity with the past and present...provides new foundations for the rebuilding of internal collegiality and external autonomy. It finds ways to integrate its many disparate parts around the assertion of a distinctive character.”

These re-interpretations of organisational cultures in the university sector suggest that they are no longer mutually exclusive. In other words, the elements of collegial and bureaucratic/managerial decision-making manifesting the features of the corporate form may often co-exist with one another and yet be accommodated within the frames of the entrepreneurial university.

These differing perspectives, despite their interconnections, can be seen to represent possible responses to two principle choices as to how universities are managed and led from the centre/top: policy definition (loose to tight) and control of implementation (loose to tight). This is represented in Figure 3.1, along with associated leadership styles.

### 3.3 From hierarchical to distributed leadership

An increasing awareness of the importance of social relations in the leadership contract, the need for a leader to be given authority by their followers and a realisation that no one individual is the ideal leader in all circumstances have given rise to a new school of leadership thought. Referred to as ‘shared’, ‘collective’ or ‘distributed’ leadership, this approach argues for a less formalised model of leadership (where leadership responsibility is dissociated from the organisational hierarchy). It is proposed that individuals at all levels in the organisation and in all roles (not simply those with an overt management dimension) can exert leadership influence over their colleagues and thus influence the overall direction of the organisation.

The concept of distributed leadership has become popular in recent years as an alternative to traditional leader-follower models of leadership, arguing instead that leadership is a property of the collective rather than the individual. Gronn describes it as ‘concertive action’ where the total is significantly more than the sum of its parts, whilst Spillane proposes that:

> “From a distributed perspective, leadership practice takes shape in the interactions of people and their situation, rather than from the actions of an individual leader.”

This approach has much in common with process theories of leadership and the systems perspective on organisations. It offers a more inclusive view of organisational life whereby individuals, groups and teams at all levels within the institution collectively influence strategic direction. Drawing on activity theory, the distributed perspective places the activity or practice of leadership centre stage:

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*47 Clark, B.R. (2001)p23
*48 Despite variations in the definitions of these terms we see them as broadly representative of an endeavour to capture the collective dimensions of leadership. Throughout this report the primary theoretical focus is on ‘distributed’ rather than ‘democratic’ leadership Woods, P.A. (2004)
This perspective poses a serious challenge to traditional hierarchical and bureaucratic models of organisation, shifting the locus of control from the individual to the collective. In a review of the literature Bennet et al suggest that, despite some variations in definition, distributed leadership is based on three main premises: firstly that leadership is an emergent property of a group or network of interacting individuals; secondly that there is an openness to the boundaries of leadership (i.e. who has a part to play both within and beyond the organisation); and thirdly, that varieties of expertise are distributed across the many, not the few. Thus, distributed leadership is represented as dynamic, relational, inclusive, collaborative and contextually-situated. It requires a system-wide perspective that not only transcends organisational levels and roles but also organisational boundaries. Thus, for example, in the field of higher education one might consider the contribution of parents, students and the local community as well as academics, administrative/support staff, members of the University Council and government policy makers.

“Taking this view, leadership is about learning together and constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively. It involves opportunities to surface and mediate perceptions, values, beliefs, information and assumptions through continuing conversations. It means generating ideas together; seeking to reflect upon and make sense of work in the light of shared beliefs and new information; and creating actions that grow out of these new understandings. It implies that leadership is socially constructed and culturally sensitive. It does not imply a leader/follower divide, neither does it point towards the leadership potential of just one person.”

That said, distributed leadership does not deny the key role played by people in formal leadership positions, but proposes that this is only the tip of the iceberg. Spillane et al argue that leadership is ‘stretched over the social and situational contexts’ of the organisation and extend the notion to include material and cultural artefacts (language, organisational systems, physical environment, etc.). The situated nature of leadership is viewed as ‘constitutive of leadership practice’ and hence demands recognition of leadership acts within their wider context.

By considering leadership practice as both thinking and activity that emerges in the execution of leadership tasks in and through the interaction of leaders, followers and situation distributed leadership offers a powerful post-heroic representation of leadership well suited to complex, changing and inter-dependent environments. The question remains, however, as to whether this is just an idealistic fantasy unattainable in practice. It is certainly true that the hierarchical nature of HEIs, with their imbalances of power, authority and resources, combined with reward, recognition and career paths that tend to reward individual over collective achievement are largely at odds with the principles and premises of distributed leadership. Furthermore the somewhat abstract representations of such forms of leadership make them difficult to convey in ways as compelling as the tales of heroism and achievement recounted from more individualistic perspectives. It is the intention of this report therefore to put more meat on the bones of what distributed leadership in universities might look like in practice and how it could be developed.

3.4 Forms of distributed leadership

Although Knight and Trowler contend that “conscious attempts to disperse leadership across the workgroup by its formal leader… should not be confused with distributed leadership”, our study does not dismiss devolution and delegation as forms of distributed leadership. Indeed, such approaches feature prominently in MacBeath et al’s taxonomy of distributed leadership in the school sector. Their research identified six ways in which distribution may take place:

1. Formal distribution (via hierarchical structures)
2. Pragmatic distribution (via ad hoc delegation to meet demands and challenges)
3. Strategic distribution (based on the planned appointment of individuals to contribute positively to the development of leadership in the organisation)
4. Incremental distribution (devolving more responsibility as people demonstrate their ability to lead)
5. Opportunistic distribution (people willingly extending their roles and taking initiative to lead)
6. Cultural distribution (leadership is assumed rather than given, shared organically and opportunistically and is embedded in the institutional culture).

56 Harris, A. (2003) p314
60 Knight, P.T. and Trowler, P.R. (2001) p45
Whilst this taxonomy gives a reasonably comprehensive picture of how leadership is distributed within schools it covers the full spectrum of leadership practice from individual, positional influence to more collective and emergent direction. As such, it makes it difficult to distinguish ‘distributed leadership’ from more traditional forms of management and leadership practice in organisations.

Other authors go further, to offer a more processual view of distributed leadership in which the division of ‘leadership labour’ is the result of “three forms of concertively patterned and reproduced activity-based conduct, each representing varying degrees of structural solidity: spontaneous collaboration, intuitive working relations, and institutionalised practices.” In other words, people work together in these three ways, and in so doing produce effects that we call ‘leadership’. For Gronn, the unit of analysis is these three forms of collective conduct rather than the choices made by individuals or even interpersonal relations per se. In a similar manner, Spillane et al distinguish between collaborated distribution (where two or more individuals work together in time and place to execute the same leadership routine), collective distribution (where two or more individuals work separately but interdependently to enact a leadership routine) and coordinated distribution (where two or more individuals work in sequence in order to complete a leadership routine), arguing that ‘leadership practice’ is the fundamental unit of analysis and is constructed and shaped over time through the interaction of leaders, followers and the situation.

Within our own study we chose to give institutional actors freedom to construct their own interpretations of distributed leadership, be it devolved, delegated, conferred, invited or assumed, and encouraged them to demonstrate their distinctive way of looking at how they saw distribution of leadership working/not working at the various levels within the institution.

3.5 Developing collective leadership

Like so much within the field of leadership studies the issue of leadership development and its impact remains highly contentious. Whilst many accounts propose that enhancing leadership capability is central to improved investment, productivity, delivery and quality across both the public and private sectors, others question its value.

Central to this argument is the question of whether or not you can train or develop leaders. Early theories of leadership proposed that great leaders emerged because of an innate combination of ability and personal characteristics (i.e. a belief that leaders were ‘born not made’). Subsequent models have questioned this assertion, arguing that leadership behaviours and competencies can be learnt and/or acquired over time. The current popular view probably lies somewhere in between, to the extent that whilst many leadership qualities (such as communication skills, strategic thinking and self-awareness) can be developed, core personal characteristics (such as dominance and sociability) are less amenable to change and will influence the type of leadership style adopted. In turn, the relative effectiveness of any of these styles will be determined by a whole array of situational and contextual factors.

The theories and models upon which these views are based, however, still tend to be couched in a very individualistic notion of leadership whereby it is conceived of as a property of the ‘leader’. Whilst this might make life easy for those recruiting and developing leaders (you simply need to identify the appropriate individuals and which skills/competencies to develop) it dissociates the practice of leadership from the organisational and situational context in which it occurs. An alternative perspective is to consider leadership as a process – contextually situated within the relationships between people (be they ‘leaders’ or ‘followers’). From this perspective what is more important than the leadership qualities of a number of individuals are the underlying processes that give rise to improved organisational effectiveness. This is the perspective implied by ‘distributed leadership’:

If considered in this way, it is perhaps possible to understand why many leadership development activities fail to achieve the sorts of outcomes desired by those investing in them. Whilst leadership can undoubtedly be instrumental in organisational performance, the development of a small number of individuals in isolation is unlikely to result in marked improvements to these or other outcome measures. Likewise, the capacity to transfer the learning from the classroom to the workplace and/or convert it to practical outcomes is beyond the remit of many programmes. Even if participants leave as ‘changed’ persons they more often than not return to unchanged organisations, or as Raelin proposes:
“Most leadership training that is being conducted in corporate off-sites is ill-advised […] because the intent of most of this training is to put leadership into people such that they can transform themselves and their organisations upon their return.”

He, and other authors⁶⁶ argue that this simply does not work and, instead, that leadership (and management) development should be aligned with the organisational culture, context and objectives, amongst a wide array of other factors. To this extent, it could well be concluded that much current leadership development is going to waste and that effort would be best spent on increasing the quality and precision, rather than the quantity, of provision⁶⁷.

Day⁶⁸ posits that leadership development is distinct from management development to the extent to which it involves preparing people for roles and situations beyond their current experience. Management development, he argues, equips managers with the knowledge, skills and abilities to enhance performance on known tasks through the application of proven solutions whilst leadership development is “orientated towards building capacity in anticipation of unforeseen challenges”⁶⁹. He continues by making a distinction between ‘leader’ and ‘leadership’ development, whereby leader development is about developing individuals in leadership roles, whilst leadership development takes a more relational view of leadership as a process involving everyone within the organisation. To this extent, Day views leadership development as being fundamentally concerned with the development of collective organisational capacity.

“In this way, each person is considered a leader, and leadership is conceptualised as an effect rather than a cause. Leadership is therefore an emergent property of effective systems design. Leadership development from this perspective consists of using social (i.e. relational) systems to help build commitments among members of a community of practice.”

This distinction is useful in encouraging us to consider what it is that we wish to achieve through executive development, even if Day’s concept of leadership development may be somewhat idealistic in practice. Leader development is an investment in ‘human capital’ to enhance intrapersonal competence for selected individuals, whereas leadership development is an investment in ‘social capital’ to develop interpersonal networks and cooperation within organisations and other social systems. According to Day, both are equally important although traditionally development programmes have tended to focus exclusively on the former. Within the current report we also take the view that both types of development are required and should be an integral part of any development initiative. Therefore, in the remainder of this report when referring to ‘leadership development’ we refer both to the development of human and social capital – of both leaders and leadership.

Even when considering leadership development in this broader context, however, it remains difficult to specify what exactly constitutes leadership, as opposed to any other form of, development. Campbell et al⁷¹ argue that the current diversity of perspectives on leadership development is misleading as it leads practitioners and researchers to suggest that, firstly, leadership development constitutes any understanding that develops individual(s) and secondly that all development activities are equally useful/effective.

Like Day, in their review, Campbell and his colleagues identify that the field of leadership development is currently dominated by individualistic approaches to development. Such approaches focus on developing five principal categories:

1. Intrapersonal attributes (e.g. self awareness)
2. Interpersonal qualities
3. Cognitive abilities
4. Communication skills, and
5. Task-specific skills.

At the intrapersonal level it could be argued that “there is no difference between becoming an effective leader and becoming a fully integrated human being”⁷² and thus Campbell et al⁷³ conclude that “there is little reason to label this leadership development, except in the broad sense that the developing individuals hold leadership positions”. The inter-personal level fits more closely with Day’s conception of ‘leadership development’, viewing leadership as a social influence process and the goal of development to enhance inter-personal competence in order to obtain the trust, respect and commitment of others⁷⁴. The additional three categories (cognitive, communication and task-specific skills) are a range of personal capabilities that help enhance an individual’s inter-personal influence. In each case a

challenge remains as to how to differentiate the types of skills required by ‘leaders’ as opposed to ‘managers’ and/or ‘followers’ and the response remains largely dependent on your theoretical and philosophical views on the nature of leadership (e.g. if you take a distributive perspective then such a differentiation is inappropriate as who is considered the ‘leader’ varies over time).

Campbell and colleagues take Katz and Kahn’s\textsuperscript{75} notion of leadership as ‘incremental influence’ as the foundation for their conception of leadership development. Thus, the aim of leadership development is to enhance “inter-personal influence over and above the influence that stems from a person’s positional authority or legitimate power”\textsuperscript{76}. From this perspective the most effective leadership development methods are likely to be those that develop core influencing skills including values that can serve as a ‘moral compass’, problem-defining and problem-solving skills, task facilitation skills, and communication and motivational skills.

From our own experience, at the Centre for Leadership Studies, of developing people in leadership positions we tend to take the view that it is important to develop all of these skills within a contextual appreciation of the cultural and organisational environment. When considering leadership, rather than management development the primary emphasis is on enabling people to think beyond the apparent restrictions of their current role and to develop the critical capabilities to move between operational and strategic modes as required - to balance an attention for detail with an understanding of the bigger picture.

“All in all, leadership development within management education should develop the ‘character’, integrity, skills and discursive intelligence necessary for the responsible exercise of power.”\textsuperscript{77}

To this extent, leadership development may well incorporate elements of more typical management and self-development programmes (including time management, project-management, delegation, self-awareness, etc.) but with the objective of creating a reflexive space in which the leader/manager can critically reflect upon current practice and experience. There is no reason to consider, therefore, that leadership development should only be offered to senior managers and, indeed, there would be good reason to encourage this kind of development throughout the organisation to enhance collective as well as individual capacity. The nature of the required intervention, however, is likely to vary depending on the job role and current level of experience of the participants.

“Leadership development is broader than programmes of activity or intervention. It is concerned with the way in which attitudes are fostered, action empowered, and the learning organisation stimulated”\textsuperscript{78}

Further elaboration on many of the arguments in this literature review can be found in the Leadership Foundation report \textit{Effective Leadership in Higher Education}\textsuperscript{79}.

\textsuperscript{75} Katz, D. and Kahn, R. (1978)
\textsuperscript{76} Campbell, D. et al (2003) p39
\textsuperscript{77} Gesling, J. (2004) p5
\textsuperscript{79} Bryman, A. (2007a)
4. METHOD

This section of the report offers a brief overview of the methodology for the current study, particularly focusing on the interview procedure.

4.1 Rationale

The study of leadership is inherently problematic for a number of reasons, including the multitude of nested phenomena (social, psychological, behavioural, environmental, etc.), its dynamic and changing character over time, and the symbolic and subjective dimensions of construction and interpretation80. Added to these challenges, our study sought to explore distributed leadership (an emergent, relational and process perspective) together with the impact of leadership development at an organisational as well as individual level.

Together these pose serious challenges to the social researcher. Due to the complexity of the issues being explored, their interconnection and the difficulty in identifying causal relationships, we chose to opt for a qualitative, interpretivist approach as is increasingly advocated in the field of Leadership Studies81. The intention of such an approach is to reveal insights into how various actors interpret and make sense of social phenomena, highlighting some of the contextual variables at work, and offering varying accounts of how leadership is perceived and enacted. The intention is not to provide a comprehensive or precise description of the current nature of higher education leadership nor empirical confirmation of the effectiveness, or otherwise, of specific leadership development interventions.

Instead, our research was designed to capture a range of perspectives on leadership and leadership development in higher education in order to identify common and competing experiences and perceptions within and between institutions. To do this we chose to focus our investigation on a sample of universities representing a broad cross-section of the UK higher education sector.

4.2 Procedure

Within institutions the main data collection method was in-depth interviews with informants at varying levels within the university hierarchy. Additional data was gathered through focus groups, document analysis and literature review.

For operational reasons we chose to limit participation in this study to informants from a selected number of UK HEIs. The initial intention was to hold interviews with about 10 people from 7-8 universities however, following a selected invitation to 20 institutions the level of interest was so high that 12 institutions were finally selected and up to 17 interviews conducted within each.

Participating institutions were selected to offer a broad cross section of UK higher education on the basis of geographic location, type (research and/or teaching focus, old or new), size, disciplinary mix and ranking. Each university was broadly explored as a case, the main source of data being in-depth interviews (enabling the capture of narrative accounts of leadership), supported by additional documentary evidence as well as two collaborative focus groups/workshops (one before the interviews and one after) with institutional representatives from the staff/leadership development division.

Within each university we interviewed 10 to 17 people at different levels. Although the exact titles and functions depended on the organisation, three broad categories of staff were interviewed (see Section 5.2 for further details):

- **Senior Executive**: Vice-Chancellors/ Principals, Pro-/Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Registrars, Deans of Faculty/School, Directors of HR on their perceptions about leadership within the university, issues they face in selecting/appointing Heads of School and Heads of Department, and institutional strategies on succession planning for this particular group of manager-academics;
- **Middle Manager-Academics**: Heads of School/ Department on their perceptions about leadership within their units and challenges of their work and processes by which leadership is distributed within their units and their needs for leadership development.
- **Professional Managers and Administrators**: Professional managers and senior administrators within the faculties, schools and departments on their perceptions about the interface between academic and administrative leadership.

Within each university 2-3 faculties/schools were selected and 2-3 schools/departments within them. The key focus of this research was on the leadership of the academic work of the university including teaching, research and ‘third stream’ (business and community) activities. Within this, we were particularly interested in leadership at the school/department level as this is the main operational unit of universities, the primary source of future senior academic
leaders, and the main point of interface between leadership of the institution and leadership of the academic discipline. We were interested both in how leadership is experienced at this level and how it interacts with other parts of the organisation. Notably we were looking to explore how strategic direction emerges and is negotiated between the varying actors.

The interviews generally lasted 45 minutes to one hour and covered the following areas, with some variation depending on nature of role: leadership strategy and approach; taking up a leadership role and leadership development; sharing leadership; and future issues. Interviews were arranged by representatives within the Staff Development Unit of each participating university. An informed consent form was completed by all interviewees and data collected according to a strict ethical protocol, including individual and organisational confidentiality.

In total, 152 interviews were conducted, with all but two (where participants requested that only written notes be taken) being electronically recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Additional contextual data was gathered through two focus groups: the first with 10 representatives from 10 universities before data collection and the second with six representatives from six universities after data collection. Within universities relevant documents were also analysed and the study supported through an extensive literature review (see Section 3).

During analysis a profile of each institution was constructed from the data to reveal the key issues and factors for each institution and leadership role.

4.3 Limitations

The primary limitation of this approach is that all interviews were conducted with holders of formal academic or administrative management posts, ranging from Head of School/Department and School Manager/Administrator to VC and Registrar (or equivalent). In effect, therefore, there is a layer of leadership that has not been engaged with (i.e. that which occurs below formal leadership at the School/departmental level) however, as nearly all academic leaders will have spent some time working at this level and many even expect to return to it (in the case of rotating headships) we have gathered quite a bit of material relevant to this. Another potential limitation is the lack of observational data, however, as members of the higher education sector themselves, combined with the site visits during this project, the researchers were able to draw on their own experiences in a range of universities when interpreting and appreciating the intricacies of the findings.

There are also some peculiarities of the institutions studied. Despite attempts to gain a balanced sample, our study population was strongly weighted towards research intensive ‘old’ universities, comprising five Russell Group universities, four 1994-Group universities and only three post-1992 universities. Furthermore, the sample was biased towards English universities, with only one from Scotland, one from Wales and none from Northern Ireland. This should be considered when generalising or extrapolating findings.
5. LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

This section of the report presents findings about organisational approaches to leadership and management within the sample universities.

5.1 Overview

Within all of the 12 universities studied evidence of managerial, collegial, enterprise and corporate forms of leadership could be identified (see Section 3.2). Broadly ‘managerial’ leadership was perceived as coming top-down from the executive group and involved putting in place mechanisms for meeting the goals and priorities of the institution, whilst ‘collegial’ leadership was perceived to emerge from within schools and departments and to be primarily concerned with the operational delivery of teaching, research and third-stream activities and strategic leadership of the discipline. ‘Corporate’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ approaches necessarily demanded a combination of vertical (top-down and bottom-up) and horizontal (across the institution) leadership. The universities in our sample placed differing emphases on these approaches, with eight of the 12 managing resources and direction setting at the faculty level and the others opting for a greater degree of devolution, with financial and strategic responsibility managed at the school/departmental level. For each approach there were advantages and disadvantages, with the former potentially being perceived as ‘micro-management’, restricting academic autonomy, and the latter being perceived as somewhat weak or ‘laissez-faire’, leading to a fragmented, inconsistent approach across the institution. What is clear, however, is that all the participating institutions have either recently, or are in the process of, restructuring and/or reviewing their structure to achieve a better balance between the needs of top-down, bottom-up and horizontal leadership and management.

5.2 Changing university structures and systems

Overall our findings point towards significant change within the higher education sector as a whole and the structure and operation of universities in particular. All universities in our sample had undergone substantial restructuring within the last five years, including the rationalisation of organisational structures including faculties, schools and departments; committees; professional and support services and the senior executive group. Invariably, this had been conducted with the intent of flattening organisational hierarchies and devolving greater strategic and operational autonomy to academic units. These trends had been accompanied by the expansion, merging, and occasionally closure, of schools/departments to create larger ‘business units’ reporting directly to senior university management.

Despite variations in the structures and their names between the HEIs in our sample we generally identified three levels within each. The first was the institutional level represented by the Senior Management Team (e.g. Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Group (VCEG)) as well as ‘central’ functions offering university-wide services (e.g. HR, finance and estates), the second a cluster of disciplines (i.e. faculty or large school), and the third a single or limited group of disciplines (i.e. department or small school)82. In three of the sample universities there was no formal faculty-level although in each case schools were large and multidisciplinary and HoSs in effect acted like Deans of Faculty managing large units with clear internal sub-divisions.

Broadly within our sample two primary models of organisation could be identified. In the first, financial and line-managing responsibility was devolved to the second level of the hierarchy (i.e. faculty or large school). Whilst there may be some variations across the institution as to the involvement of schools/departments below this level in budgetary and resourcing matters, formal accountability lay primarily at the second level, with occasional exceptions for particularly large or economically significant units such as medical and/or business schools.

Within the second model financial and line-management responsibility was devolved to the third level (i.e. school or department). Within this model, the Dean of Faculty (or School) served a primarily connecting role of facilitating, coordinating and communicating between disciplines and levels rather than a vertical line-management function. Within this model, the Dean’s power is vested in interpersonal relationships and their representation on the VCEG/SMT rather than formal resource power. To use the analogy offered by Katzenbach and Smith83 they were seen to act as a ‘matchmaker’ rather than a ‘switch’.

A simplified, annotated diagram of these structures is given in Figure 5.1.

Within each of the universities visited there were some variations to the models above, with different approaches being taken for different parts of the university and different

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82 ‘Within this report executive’, ‘top’ or ‘central’ university relates to the first level, ‘faculty/school’ to the second and ‘school/department’ to the third.

functions. Thus, for example, in one new (post-92) university there were some Deans of Faculty who served a cross-cutting university-wide role as well as being responsible for their group of schools/faculties, whilst others did not. In other universities DVCs/PVCs held both territorial and cross-cutting responsibilities, with not all faculties/schools being overseen/supported by someone at this level.

Broadly, however, the findings point towards a tendency within all institutions to devolve financial and line management responsibility down the hierarchy and to encourage both vertical and horizontal management and leadership. Although the precise reasoning for such changes varied between institutions, it generally appeared to be largely in response to changing funding mechanisms (from central government, research bodies and students); external regulation, legislation and assessments of organisational performance (including teaching, research, employer engagement, etc.); increasing competition (through the internationalisation of higher education and greater mobility within the academic community); and the merging and/or downsizing of separate institutions (see Section 8). Together

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**UNIVERSITY STRUCTURES**

**MODEL 1**

**Dean of Faculty/School as budget holder**

Top Management Team - VC

Cross-cutting DVCs/PVCs with university-wide roles

Territorial/sectoral DVCs/PVCs with responsibility for a cluster of schools/faculties

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**Dean of Faculty/School** as a formal management role

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**Head of School/Dept** as a semi-formal management role

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**Cross cutting DVCs/PVCs** with university-wide roles include those responsible for R, T&L, Strategy, Resources, etc. They do not have formal line-management responsibilities.

**Territorial/sectoral DVCs/PVCs** are responsible for a cluster of schools/faculties. They can either have a formal line-management responsibility for Heads/Deans or not.

**Dean of Faculty/School** in this model is a formal role and has the main formal budget holding and line-management responsibility. The Dean may be a member of the VCEG and serve a similar role to that of Territorial/sectoral DVCs/PVC where no such role exists.

**Head of School/Department** in this model is regarded as an informal management role - i.e. it does not carry formal financial and line management responsibilities. In two sample universities this role is not formally recognised in the university management structure despite its existence.

**Prevalence:** this model predominated in 8 of the 12 sample universities.

**MODEL 2**

**Head of Department as budget holder**

Top Management Team - VC

Cross-cutting DVCs/PVCs with university-wide roles

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**Dean of Faculty/School** as a cross-cutting rather than hierarchical management role

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**Head of School/Dept** as a formal management role

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**DVCs/PVCs** with cross-cutting roles (R, T&L, Strategy, Resources, etc). In universities of this model, there was no instance of a DVC/PVC with responsibility for faculty and Deans were members of the VCEG.

**Dean of Faculty/School** in this model is a cross-cutting rather than hierarchical management role, with little formal budget-holding or line-management responsibility (but recognized within the university management structure all the same). The role involves coordinating a cluster of fairly autonomous schools/departments and facilitating communication between the levels. In one university Deans have a cross-institutional role apart from being responsible for a faculty and in many cases they serve a leadership role beyond the institution.

**Head of School/Department** in this model is a formal management role and has the main budget-holding and line-management responsibility.

**Prevalence:** this model predominated in 4 of the 12 sample universities.
these factors point towards greater marketisation of the sector and the requirement to become more commercially orientated. Inclusion and engagement of leaders and managers at lower levels of the organisation, it would seem, is a response rather than a driver for change.

Within this context, effective leadership has become increasingly seen as a strategic and operational priority. Talk of ‘leadership’, as opposed to ‘management’ and/or ‘administration’, however, has been a relatively recent trend and the degree to which it was mentioned varied between institutions. Whilst some universities used the notion of ‘leadership’ to encourage active engagement with strategic and operational decision-making (without necessarily implying an administrative and/or bureaucratic burden) others felt more comfortable with the concepts of ‘management’ and/or ‘administration’ as, particularly the latter, was already perceived to be part of the agreed academic workload (i.e. teaching, research and administration). To this extent ‘leadership’ appears to carry a powerful rhetorical function that may help in reframing traditional conceptions of academic work. On the other hand, it may be perceived as a managerial device to enhance commitment to institutional aims. Either way, the language used seems to be an important aspect of how the need for change is communicated within universities.

**HoD, Pre-1992 University:** “There’s a certain amelioration between the kinds of attitudes expressed by central management and a general perception across the university that there’s a clash between a business culture and an academic culture and I think HoDs are caught in the midst of that. There’s a certain amount of translation again in terms of perception as well as language. You try to convert some of the statements into something a bit more palatable for the perhaps more old school academics. A classic example is referring to the students as customers and all that kind of thing. It doesn’t go down well in departments but it’s clearly the way that people in the centre perceive it. That same sort of idea will roll down to a number of different areas as well. I don’t think there’s necessarily anything wrong with it but it’s not the language you wish to use with colleagues.”

The current study appears to have been conducted during or towards the end of a period of intense change in UK higher education, where institutions have been forced to become more commercially aware and responsive to their markets. It is unclear whether or not this is an unprecedented period of change for the sector and/or whether the rate of change is now slowing. However, within most of the institutions visited there was a sense of having completed the most substantial changes and a need now to consolidate the new structures. Indeed leaders, particularly at the school/department level, appeared weary of change and were looking for a period of greater stability. Whether or not this will happen in the light of the changes and trends identified in Section 8, is another matter.

### 5.3 Institutional approaches to leadership

The changes highlighted above point to an increasing tendency to devolve operational leadership to academic units. Indeed, within all of the universities visited, there was a sense that the management and leadership of the discipline (i.e. what should be taught and researched) was best placed in the hands of those with the subject expertise. Within this changing context, the role of the VCEG was increasingly taken to be one of strategic oversight – providing broad strategic vision and objectives within which academic schools and disciplines can agree their own goals and priorities. Thus, crudely, the role of the VCEG was seen as ensuring leadership of the ‘institution’ whilst that of academic leaders was leadership of the ‘discipline’. PVCs and other cross-cutting roles were primarily in place to ensure an alignment and integration of institutional and disciplinary leadership.

In achieving these aims there was considerable variation between and within institutions as to the preferred leadership approach. What was clear, however, is that some form of balance between top-down (managerial) and bottom-up (collegial) leadership is required. Whilst ideally these should be complementary processes, supporting and reinforcing one another, in reality a tension was experienced between these approaches in our sample. A further important dimension recognised, yet difficult to achieve in practice, was horizontal coordination, communication and collaboration.

Figure 5.2 attempts to capture these tensions diagrammatically, indicating that within academic units leadership was primarily focused on the operational (and to some extent strategic) interests of the discipline. By contrast, at the VCEG level, leadership took a broader, more strategic focus on the institution and its place within the wider regional, national and international context. Within this structure, some roles were primarily concerned with managerial control (i.e. formal vertical channels of influence) whilst others were more cross-cutting and concerned with integration and
coordination across the institution (although obviously the remit and nature of these roles varied between institutions). Tensions were inevitably experienced between these differing functions and became especially clear as individuals progressed through the organisational hierarchy - moving from a primary allegiance to the discipline to the institution and alternating between vertical and horizontal leadership roles.

In the majority of HEIs we visited, organisational strategies and policies tended to originate from the most senior university level, whilst the operationalisation of these was devolved to lower levels. The majority of interviewees agreed that a degree of top-down leadership and direction was inevitable given the current context of higher education, but that the importance of collegial and bottom-up leadership should not be underestimated. Without this dimension of engagement it would be both impossible to manage the complexity of university work or to gain the commitment of professional academics.

On this point, despite the limitations of our sample, it appeared that there was a greater acceptance of top-down leadership in new (post-1992) than in old (pre-1992) universities. There may be a number of reasons for this, including the vocational orientation of such institutions attracting more late entrants to academia who are familiar with management practices in more corporate environments; the relatively recent history of Local Education Authority (LEA) control and the move to university status being associated with greater autonomy and freedom; and the clearer recognition of academic management as a desirable career pathway within this part of the sector (see Section 6).

**PVC, Post-1992 University:** “I think like a lot of post ’92 institutions, compared with pre ’92, the managerial culture is stronger, and therefore the VC has been able to impose his will just through being the chief executive. He doesn’t necessarily have to go through the decision-making processes to make something happen.”

In institutions where a predominantly ‘managerial’ or top-down approach to leadership dominated, senior university managers were often perceived, at the school/department level, to be micro-managing and interfering unnecessarily in academic affairs. In these institutions middle-level academic managers expressed a desire for greater devolution of decisions on academic matters.
By contrast, interviewees in universities with highly devolved decision-making structures frequently expressed a desire for stronger direction and greater clarity of organisational priorities (usually from the VC/Principal) to help guide their activities. In these instances, manager-academics at the lower levels felt frustrated by what they saw as indecisiveness or evasiveness from the Senior Management Group and indicated a need for greater support and recognition.

In most institutions the need to align and connect top-down and bottom-up leadership appeared to arise from an intent to become more ‘corporate’ (in terms of meeting a realistic and efficient business model) and/or ‘entrepreneurial’ (in terms of innovation in products and services) and most VCs and Principals interviewed saw themselves as the ‘CEOs’ – responsible for running an effective and sustainable organisation.

5.4 Institutional roles, systems and processes

During interviews, respondents were asked to describe their roles and how they saw leadership occurring within the institution. They were also invited to identify the key leadership roles and processes within the organisation.

It has already been remarked that the VC/Principal generally saw him/herself as the CEO of the university and ultimately where ‘the buck stops’. S/he operated, however, within a complex structure, needing to work effectively with a wide range of groups and individuals and reporting to a variety of stakeholders including the University Council.

In universities with a somewhat managerial approach to decision-making, leadership was said to be embodied very much in and around the office of the VC/Principal. In a number of universities, other senior managers, such as the DVC, Registrar, Director of Finance and/or Director of Strategic Planning, were also seen as providing substantial strategic leadership and direction.

When responsibilities were split between multiple roles (e.g. VC and DVC, Dean and Deputy Dean, and Head and Deputy Head) this was often done on the basis of external (acting as a figurehead and liaising with key stakeholders outside the institution) and internal focus (dealing with ‘hands on’ strategy and operations within the institution). The decision as to who took on which responsibilities largely arose out of one-to-one negotiation and a response to personal strengths and interests.

There were also many instances, however, where there was a lack of clarity over the division of roles and plenty of opportunity for confusion and competition. This situation tended to be most strongly felt for cross-cutting roles at the university, faculty or school level. Thus, for example, there was some confusion over the relative roles and responsibilities of the PVC of Research (university-level), Dean of Research (faculty-level) and Head of Research (school-level). Role ambiguity was particularly keenly experienced in universities with a devolved resource management structure in which case faculty and university level roles (especially PVC/Dean) held significantly less budgetary and line-management responsibility than Heads of School/Department. In this case, although nominally lines of accountability ran between the Head and VC via the PVC/Dean there was ample opportunity to bypass the formal channels and, in effect, cut the PVC/Dean out of the loop.

Thus, from a command and control perspective it might seem advisable to place more direct power in the hands of the PVC/Dean, so as to reduce the number of direct reports to senior management and clarify channels of command. Despite this, however, a number of universities expressed benefits from having a less formal line of command. In these instances, significant benefits accrued from having someone at the PVC/Dean level who could act as an impartial advisor, arbitrator or representative. By virtue of their need to influence through more informal means, such roles acted as valuable facilitators, both for encouraging inter-disciplinary dialogue and activity and for representing the needs of the schools to the central university and vice-versa.

Non-budget holding Dean of Faculty, Pre-1992 University: 
“[HoDs] are strongly autonomous because they’re the budget holders and they have to make the case. What I can do is facilitate the process when it comes to its progression through the university machine. Eventually it will come up to a Senior Management Group and more likely than not I’ll be on it… The HoDs will be invited to come and make their case. They then leave and the first thing that happens is the chair of that committee asks what the chair of the faculty thinks. So if they’ve discussed it with me and convinced me that the case is strong then they’re going to get a much smoother ride at that sort of level than if they come in cold and haven’t primed me with the right information to help them with their case. I champion their cause but at the same time, because I have an overview of the whole faculty, I can make more of a fair judgement. The HoD job is to do the best for their
Another tension, felt particularly strongly at the HoS/HoD-level, was between being a peer to academic colleagues and also being their line-manager. In effect, the HoS/HoD sometimes felt torn between the demands of the institution as a whole and those of his/her own school/department. This was particularly significant in pre-1992 universities with rotating headships where there was an expectation for the HoS/HoD to return to the ranks of their colleagues once their term was up. For many, the Association of University Teachers (AUT) industrial action short of a strike, which occurred during the period of the interviews, had been the first major test of their allegiances and one where it became clear that their responsibility was to the institution even if they felt sympathetic to the cause of those taking action.

In terms of the key decision-making bodies within universities, as a rule, the main decision-making body for the institution as a whole was the VC/Principal’s Executive Group (often held on Monday-mornings) comprising, amongst others, VC/Principal, DVC, PVCs and/or Deans of Faculty (Provost), Registrar and Director of Finance (Bursar). Similar groups were present at the faculty and school level which, likewise, had a significant strategic remit within universities with a devolved structure. In all cases these groups comprised a mix of academic and professional service staff and were concerned with the practical delivery of services and achievement of objectives. These groups highlight the blurring distinction between academic and administrative leadership and the merging of managerial and academic priorities. At an individual-level, our findings provide support for ‘hybrid’ roles that combine both academic and administrative responsibilities.

In addition to the executive/management groups there was invariably an extended Senior Management Group (SMG), comprising members of the VCEG, all other academic and professional services Heads, and a range of other stakeholder representatives (including student representatives). Such groups were relatively large as decision-making bodies (usually over 12-15 members) but were seen as essential forums for communication and debate. In addition to this, there were a number of influential committees focused on particular aspects of university management/administration. Of these, those concerned with resource allocation and strategic planning were particularly influential, and frequently chaired by members of the VCEG, with a select membership drawn from senior roles across the university.

A further factor considered was the number of direct reports to different managers. In organisations with a devolved structure there were often large numbers of people reporting to the same person thus putting great pressure on their time and availability. On the other hand, putting in place reporting structures that did not meet the actual needs of the principal actors was seen to be counter-productive and occasionally led to decisions being taken via the ‘backdoor’ (e.g. the HoS bypassing the PVC if they did not have executive authority). In most cases, interviewees discussed the need to identify the way in which decisions were actually made within the university, locating the key decision-makers rather than depending on the formal channels as captured in organisational charts.

Whilst formal top-down channels for communication and influence typically ran from the VCEG to Faculty to School/department, the formalised mechanism for upwards influence was the committee structure, usually reporting to Senate. Despite the large importance placed on the committee structure within a ‘collegial’ approach to leadership and management, in all of the institutions there was a sense that the traditional committee structure was unwieldy and largely unproductive and had, to a large extent, simply become a ‘rubber-stamping’ exercise. In many cases it was believed that the true decisions were made outside these groups (through executive meetings and/or informal networks) and that committees simply tended to slow down decision-making.

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85 Now part of the University and College Union (UCU)
86 Whitchurch, C. (2006a, 2006b)
HoS, Post-1992 University: “I think [the committees are] there as a pseudo-consultation exercise so people think they’re involved in the decision-making but decisions go round and round. I’ve only been here six months but in that time the school learning and teaching committee hasn’t made a single decision. Stuff gets passed up and passed down, so I’ll be in one group and they’ll say ‘this has to go to there’ or I’ll be somewhere else and they’ll say ‘we can’t make that decision, it has to go up there’.”

In terms of aligning school/department direction with university strategy, the annual strategic planning process was seen as essential within many universities. This process gave academic units the opportunity to devise a business plan and set out their goals and priorities within the wider remit of the university strategy. Frequently this was the only time where schools/departments liaised directly with the central/senior university about planned initiatives and the only opportunity for the university as a whole to ensure an integrated and coherent approach across the varying units. Despite this, however, universities with a highly devolved structure found it hard to foster collaboration and interdisciplinary activities between academic units, particularly due to inflexibilities in resource management systems.

5.5 Formal and informal networks

Within universities, like most large organisations, great emphasis is placed on formal mechanisms for leadership and management. Our research reveals, however, the significance of informal networks and relationships in the execution of leadership.

At inter-School level, informal networks such as the HoS email group, monthly lunches, etc. were identified as important channels of communication, influence and support. Such forums offered Heads (or peer groups at other levels within the university) the potential to discuss university policies and practices; to provide support and mentoring; to ‘sound out’ opinions; and to learn about what was going on in other parts of the university. Significantly, too, such forums offered the opportunity for post holders to develop a sense of ‘shared identity’ as members of the university management structure and, where necessary, to collectively join forces and challenge senior management decisions. Such networks appeared to be particularly valuable where members did not have a formal forum in which to meet. Similar groups were observed amongst both academic and professional/functional staff groups at varying levels within the organisation and were deemed to constitute an essential element of the social fabric of the organisation.

PVC, Post-1992 University: “I use networks. If I used the formal channels I’d never get anywhere because all the formal channels are the teaching and learning committee, and the senate… they’re all academics. One of the most influential groups in the university is the planning resources group, who divert resources and make decisions. I’ve had things going via other people to the planning resources group and I’ll just go around and lobby. I’ll go round to lots of people and make sure they understand it before they see it. A paper isn’t worth anything until you’ve been around to make sure they understand your position.”

HR Director, Pre-1992 University: “There’s also an informal grouping of the academic members of that committee and that’s used for debate and consultation prior to more formal processes. I think the risk is that more decision making flows to that informal body and not so much to the other. That’s not unusual in the organisation and there’s a sort of cyclical nature to these structures in terms of how well they’re working.”

Within the universities visited, as executive authority was increased for HoSs/HoDs and/or Deans of Faculty/School there was a tendency to increase representation by all members on the SMG, thus giving them a greater ownership and awareness of senior-level decisions. In addition to formal meetings and committees, however, at several of the universities in our sample the VC and other members of the VCEG held regular informal meetings (usually lunches or coffee mornings) where they interacted with staff from across the institution. These events also served as important channels for upwards influence from people at lower organisational levels.

There was also evidence of considerable leadership influence being exerted by individuals outside the formal university hierarchy. These were most frequently senior academics with a well established research record and the ability to attract high-quality academic staff, students and research funding to the institution. Whilst such people may well lead research centres, manage research budgets and sit on key committees, their influence appeared to be largely a consequence of their role within the wider academic, practitioner and policy community than their membership
of a specific institution. Such people have the potential to be highly sought-after and mobile within the sector and universities may have to work hard to retain them. Losing a person in such a role may result in the departure of a significant number of other staff who are in their jobs not because of the institution per se, but because of who they are working with. In such cases, although not formally part of the university management structure their influence is felt far and wide across and beyond the institution. It is also increasingly the case that ‘hybrid’ professional managers can exert similar influence through their ability to attract and manage funds and people.

5.6 Leadership of professional and support services

The discussion so far has focused primarily on the leadership of academic work. Another essential dimension, however, is the leadership of professional and support services. A key element of the restructuring of universities in recent years has involved a revision and reframing of services, including the registry, HR, finances, hospitality, estates, IT and student affairs. Such services, whilst not directly involved in academic provision, are central components of the university infrastructure and essential to the effective delivery of teaching, research and business/community engagement.

Within many of the universities visited there has been a trend towards the ‘professionalisation’ of these services to render them more commercially orientated, customer focused (both internal and external) and recognised as partners rather than subservient to academic mission. This trend has sought to breakdown the old academic-administrative divide experienced within many institutions and to replace it with a more integrated or ‘hybrid’ approach.

Associated with this trend, and the devolution of greater operational and strategic authority to faculties, schools and departments, was a tendency to decentralise services such as HR. To this extent, rather than remaining within a centralised area, HR specialists were being moved out into schools so as to provide a more direct, hands-on response. At the risk of going native or duplicating provision this was generally perceived to enhance the quality of support.

Indeed I think it’s quite a good little understanding, that the reporting line is one way, but the working arrangements are that way. Great. That relieves the [Deans] of one of the difficulties caused by absenteeism or maternity leave or anything. I have to cover, but they have to enjoy the service and that’s how it works. The downsides to it are obvious ones really. It is more expensive than either a fully devolved or fully centralized model. There is an element of duplication. There is a difficulty of taking advantage of scale of activity. There is a tendency, although I have to say I think our staff manages very well, there is a tendency towards the ‘Going Native’ issue, which is a very central perspective on life. I don’t think that’s been particularly noticeable here. I mean if ‘Going Native’ means supporting the faculty then good.”

Universities within the UK still generally operate with a high ratio of academics to support staff however there is some evidence of a shift. This was most clearly evident within schools/departments with a high external focus and engagement with businesses and professionals (such as Business Schools) who invariably had higher numbers of professional/support staff involved in student and employer liaison. With the intention of many university departments to grow their post-graduate numbers as well as international students (both of which generally demand greater support) it is likely that this trend may spread.

Focusing on how professional and support services are delivered is an essential element of university leadership. Many organisations were starting to recruit high-profile professional managers (e.g. for IT, HR, finance, marketing) from outside the higher education sector and paying more competitive rates for their expertise.

Another feature of the professionalisation of leadership and management, present within many of the universities visited was the recruitment of School/Faculty Managers to work alongside Deans and Heads in the strategic and operational management of the Faculty/School. Such roles are quite different from the traditional Administrator who was usually viewed as an administrative assistant for the Dean/Head and school management group. The intention is that such staff will increasingly take on responsibility for the financial and administrative leadership of the school, freeing up the formal Dean/Head to focus, at a more strategic level, on academic leadership. This is quite a change from traditional academic working arrangements and whilst well received in some quarters has been harder to implement in others (usually

Registrar, Pre-1992 University: “The most popular part of the administrative service is the service which is delivered locally in the faculties - we get a lot of support for that. The Heads of Administration report to me but they work for the faculty and I’ve got no problem with that as a structure,
with the Dean/Head continuing to behave as before and failing to delegate much to the School/Faculty Manager).

The approach to the professionalisation of services has also varied between institutions, with some pushing strongly from the top and others leaving it more to the discretion of individual faculties and/or schools. Despite this, there remained an expectation of consultation and participatory decision making amongst academics and the sense that ‘professionalisation’ of academic leadership through the introduction of senior managers with no academic experience (rather like the introduction of non-healthcare professionals in the NHS) would be both undesirable and unworkable.

5.7 Key points

Figure 5.3 below represents the main findings from this section diagrammatically.
6. TAKING UP A LEADERSHIP ROLE

This section of the report presents findings about individual motivations, perceived barriers as well as incentives for taking up a leadership role, along with appointment practices and selection criteria for formal leadership roles in the 12 universities studied.

6.1 Overview

In terms of motivations for taking up a leadership role, whilst these broadly map onto Deem’s three tracks (career-route, reluctant-manager and ‘good citizen’), the actual situation is inevitably more complex, with individual motivations changing over time (e.g. from reluctant manager to career-route as the person finds they enjoy and are good at management and leadership) and often coinciding alongside one another (e.g. the reluctant-manager being persuaded to take on the role out of the urge to be a good-citizen and concern over what would happen to the academic unit if they didn’t). Although many of the cultural and organisational barriers remain, there is clear evidence of an increased interest in, and changing attitudes towards, leadership and management in higher education with the majority of formal leaders interviewed enjoying the job they are performing despite its challenges and increased complexity. Leadership and management roles such as Dean of Faculty and/or Head of Department are no longer seen as purely ‘operational’ or ‘administrative’ and have evolved into something more strategic and empowering. Despite this, filling the post of Head of Department was reportedly more difficult than recruiting to more senior roles (such as Dean and DVC/PVC). There is an increasing diversity of practice for selecting and appointing formal leaders and manager-academics, with leaders being recruited from within the institution, other HEIs and from outside the higher education sector and posts being increasingly advertised externally. Some ‘old’ universities have also introduced permanent leadership roles and the terms of appointments are also increasingly negotiated on an individual basis. Academic excellence is no longer the primary selection criteria, with universities beginning to take leadership and management capabilities and experience into consideration more seriously and becoming more explicit about it.

6.2 Motivations for taking up a leadership role

In 2001, Deem noted three routes into management for academics. The first was the career-track route, where an early career decision is taken to pursue a management role. This was typical of a minority of respondents, mostly in post-1992 universities. The second route was the reluctant manager route. This was typical of HoDs in the pre-1992 universities, where such roles are usually temporary. The final route was what Deem termed the good citizen route, where an individual chooses to take on a more senior management role (e.g. at PVC level), usually at a quite late career stage, in order ‘to give something back’ to their institutions. Deem argued that the last route may be declining, as manager-academic roles now occur earlier in careers. Our study, however, has clearly found changes and a number of different routes to formal leadership and management for academics.

6.2.1 The reluctant leader and manager

Within the classic ‘reluctant manager’ route in ‘old’ universities described by Deem there was a sense of obligation where someone took on a formal leadership and management role because the faculty, school and/or department needed to be led, rather than because they thought they were the right person for the job or had a desire to do it. There was rarely competition in ‘old’ universities for deanship/headship roles. Some were persuaded or even coerced into it, whilst others saw it as a case of ‘buggins turn’. This practice, however, is increasingly viewed as unsustainable within universities of all types, due to increased mobility of the labour market and the recognised need for effective leadership and attempts are being made to pursue a more ‘professional’ approach to develop institutional leadership at various levels.

Registrar, Pre-1992 University: “The creation of a smaller number of large units I think is a fairly general trend. When you couple it with vast increases in student numbers over the last twenty or so years and not so large but significant increases in staff numbers and financial responsibility, coupled with a viciously increased set of regulations and expectations on virtually anything you care to name… it produces an atmosphere where the first amongst equals HoD buggins turn approach, that characterised certainly the pre-92 University Sector in the mid 80’s, has given way to an appointment of a HoS as a recognised managerial post, perhaps for a fixed term… with an expectation that that person is leading the school in a way which would have been unrecognisable twenty years ago.”

6.2.2 The career-track leader and manager

The career-track route to formal leadership is still strongly evident in post-1992 universities. In ‘new’ universities in our sample the interviewees generally perceived formal
leadership and management roles as attractive. The reasons for this included the organisational culture in ‘new’ universities, which was perceived to be less negative about managerialism than in ‘old’ universities, having permanent leadership and management roles and seeing them as a clear career progression, being interested in and enjoying management, seeking a higher salary and recognition. Semi-formal roles at the faculty/departmental level (e.g. Deputy Dean/Head, Subject Leaders, Heads of Undergraduate/Postgraduate Studies) in ‘new’ universities were often seen by academics as an opportunity for leadership experience development and a route to more formal leadership roles and in some universities automatically lead to a Principal or Senior Lectureship. In contrast to some of the ‘old’ universities, the Dean and Head roles in ‘new’ universities bear tangible financial benefits and are clearly defined.

The career-track route to headship and deanship was also clearly evident in pre-1992 universities. From the very start of their career, academics pursuing this route (usually of younger age) seek roles on committees or take up leadership tasks and responsibilities even before having a formally recognised leadership role within the institution. These interviewees reported that they had always been interested in academic management, wanted to be involved in university politics, found performing their administrative duties (e.g. Head of Research, Course Leader, Principal Investigator, etc.) at the faculty/departmental level enjoyable, liked interacting with senior people, and wanted to move to a more senior management level.

Staff developers in ‘old’ universities also noted that a new breed of academics who want to develop a more rounded set of skills is emerging. These people are not only interested in developing their research and teaching skills but increasingly seek support for developing their leadership and management expertise. With the introduction of the Performance and Development Review (PDR) process which covers performance in three domains (research, teaching and administration), the number of career-track manager-academics is most likely to increase as academics will increasingly recognise leadership and management as an integral part of their job and regard such functions as central to their progression opportunities. A high level of interest in, and recruitment to, programmes such as the Institute of Education MBA in higher education and Leadership Foundation HoD courses also bears testament to the change in attitudes towards formal leadership and management.

6.2.3 From the reluctant to career leader and manager

The majority of interviewees reported that they came into formal leadership roles almost by ‘default’, which could be viewed in most cases, at least initially, as a ‘reluctant manager’ route. With time, however, despite their initial reluctance to take on the role, the majority also found they enjoyed performing a leadership role and found it both challenging and rewarding. Some discovered (occasionally to their surprise) that they were very good at it. Whilst in ‘new’ universities everyone who takes up a formal leadership role can from that moment on be considered to be a de facto career leader and manager, our findings indicate that even in ‘old’ universities, given the opportunity, about 90% of interviewees at the Dean and Head level would prefer to progress up the formal leadership and management ladder, either within their own or another institution, rather than returning to being a ‘pure’ academic after their term in office. This change of opinion indicates a shift in individuals’ identities, whilst in post, from the reluctant to career manager. Indeed, a few interviewees have moved from pre-1992 to post-1992 universities to take up permanent headships/deanships after their stints as Deans/Heads in ‘old’ universities. Others have got a taste of being a Dean/Head and have progressed along the management route at a higher level within their own universities.

In addition to reported changing attitudes to leadership and management in general, there are many other reasons why a formal leadership and management route may be perceived to be a more attractive option among leaders and manager-academics in ‘old’ universities than that of going back to being a ‘pure’ academic. Line-managing and budget-holding Deans and Heads expressed many positive aspects of the job and reported that despite their roles becoming more complex, challenging and demanding they, nevertheless, enjoyed it, primarily because of the power and responsibility now afforded to this level (see Section 5). In the words of respondents, the roles have evolved into something more strategic and important, with increased decision-making on strategic, management and financial issues, promoting and influencing their discipline, facilitating the work of colleagues, student affairs, internal and external communication, ‘third-stream’ activities, staff development, and many more besides. The tasks which Deans and Heads need to perform now are clearly beyond conventional academic stewardship and require more than a ‘great researcher figurehead’ or ‘gifted amateur’.
Dean and Head roles were reported to have become more empowered, with greater opportunities to influence the overall direction of the university. As managerial power is very much tied to budget-holding positions within the university, some interviewees were quite frank in saying that they enjoyed the power and influence the deanship/headship gives them. Also, with the introduction of professional managers working alongside Deans/Heads in most institutions, they were able to concentrate more effort on strategic and longer-term priorities than on day-to-day running of their faculties/ departments.

Due to the demands and challenges of their roles, Deans and Heads found they had little time to spend on research and, sooner or later, were faced with the decision of pursuing a management or research career. Some decided on a management career because they perceived their research profile to have been diminished to such an extent (especially with an increased term of deanship/headship) that even a sabbatical period would be insufficient to catch up. Others became disillusioned about ever reaching (or returning to) ‘world-class’ research status or were discouraged by the current performance-orientated climate associated with the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and the fierce competition for grants. In these cases they often preferred to facilitate the research of others rather than themselves by taking up a more senior leadership role. This suggests that polarisation between academic and formal leadership and management work is increasing and, as a result, the pool from which to draw formal leadership roles further down the institution may have become smaller. This finding has major implications for current and future leadership development activities and succession planning (see Section 9).

### 6.2.4 Damage rectifiers and limiters

In our study we found quite a number of manager-academics who claimed to have taken on the role because they believed that they could do a better job than their predecessor and/or other nominated candidates and by doing so would rectify or limit damage to their faculty/department. They reported experiences of bad leadership and management and it was this that made them think about stepping in. These people often reported that they had not considered becoming a formal leader and manager-academic at an earlier stage of their career and frequently took significant persuasion from their colleagues and superiors prior to agreeing to do the role, but once in post did not hesitate to take a proactive stance.

It could be argued that this account may simply be a justification that disguises self-ambition and downplays a thirst for power and influence. Nevertheless, the motivations reported by these people included taking their disciplines, faculties and departments forward, and supporting their staff and students by creating a positive environment for achieving success in research, teaching, learning and ‘third stream’ activities. The rhetoric, or justification, for engagement was therefore one of social benefit rather than personal gain. Within this, the catalyst for action was generally a desire to minimise the impact of poor and negative leadership/management rather than to promote self-interest.

### 6.2.5 From emergent to formal leader

The route to formal academic leadership positions, particularly those of HoS/HoD was often via emergent leadership at a
lower level. This emergent engagement with leadership eventually resulted in an individual being singled out for a more formal leadership role. For instance, a professor in the science department with a research group of post-doctoral researchers and PhD students, and a team of technicians, has to demonstrate leadership which, whilst different from that required of a Dean/HoD, may well be taken as evidence of their ability to adapt to such roles.

Leaders of research groups who demonstrate strong informal leadership skills are often nominated by their colleagues for formal university leadership roles and hence the two types of leadership meet together. Likewise attendance on committees and working groups indicates a desire to be involved in the wider operation of the university and offers opportunities to network and interact with senior colleagues from across the institution.

The route to such leadership could possibly be described as ‘servant leadership’ which:

“Begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve… then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. He or she is sharply different from the person who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions.”

The motivation comes from an academic or professional interest that results in one accumulating formal responsibilities rather than a desire for formal recognition and responsibility.

VC, Post-1992 University: “I spent the rest of my time working my way up through [University X] but I never saw it as a career path, and I think most of my fellow VCs would say the same thing. I joined universities as an academic – a researcher and teacher – and that’s what I remained for a long time… Due to a number of circumstances that were really only marginally to do with me I found myself elected to a Dean of School position quite early on in my career. I completed that term of office and then went back and took some research leave and re-established myself as a researcher and teacher. Then another set of circumstances came up and so I signed on for a second term. At the end of that the VC asked me to become one of his PVCs. I served one term as PVC and then went on leave. I went (abroad) to work in a university for a year and the VC asked me to come back as DVC at the end of my period of leave, which is what I did. I did that for three or four years and then started looking for VC positions. I was headhunted into this one. So the synopsis of my career is there were several forks in the road and choices made along the way but no grand design. I think if you’d asked me when I joined the profession I would have said I’d hope to end up as a professor of my subject.”

6.2.6 External manager route

Whilst the majority of formal academic leaders emerge from within faculties/departments there are also leaders and manager-academics recruited from outside the higher education sector92. In a few institutions in our sample, there have been recent appointments to deanship and headship (but not limited to it) from the private and public sectors. These individuals, who have had leadership and management experience elsewhere, reported taking up leadership roles in higher education for a new challenge or exciting career change. The areas for which external appointments usually happen are of particular strategic importance and/or are vocationally oriented.

The discussion in this section does not suggest that these are the only routes and motivations for people taking up formal leadership and management roles in higher education. The routes and motivations are probably as diverse as the number of people seeking formal roles, but nevertheless, these routes and motivations were most frequently identified by the interviewees. Motivations can also vary depending on the nature of the role (e.g. line-managing and budget-holding Dean/Head as opposed to semi-formal Dean/Head or line-managing DVC/PVC as opposed to cross-cutting and coordinating DVC/PVC) and with time.

The transition between different motivations and career routes is represented diagrammatically in Figure 6.1.

6.3 Recruitment and selection

Getting appointment to leadership and management positions within HEIs right at every level is crucial because it can influence the strategic direction and continued success of the institution. Many HEIs have now developed their own guidelines and procedures for recruitment and selection, which differ by institutional level because of the nature and requirements of the role, procedures and available candidates. To avoid overlap with two other Leadership Foundation-funded projects the discussion in this section focuses on manager-academics rather than professional managers and/or the role of VC/Principal93.

91 Greenleaf, R. (1970)
92 The challenges facing, leaders/managers coming from outside the higher education sector is the subject of a Leadership Foundation-funded project by M. Harper. Details can be found at www.lfhe.ac.uk/research/projects
93 For more details on the changing nature of ‘professional managerial roles in UK higher education see Whitchurch, C. (2006a, 2006b); and on the role of VCs in UK higher education see Breakwell, G. (2006). Details can be found at www.lfhe.ac.uk/research/projects
6.3.1 Recruiting and appointing middle-level academic leaders

Despite increasing interest and a shift in attitudes towards leadership and management in the universities visited, it was reported that academics in general remain a challenging group to engage. The barriers identified by the interviewees and previous research are arguably less significant in ‘new’ universities where, as noted above, formal leadership positions are clearly seen as career progression and a real alternative to research careers:

1. **Limited interest:** Within ‘old’ universities there was a perception amongst interviewees of limited interest, at least initially, in management and administration for academics. This view supports conclusions drawn by Raddon94 regarding the value academics place on teaching, research and administration. Raddon found that research and teaching are clearly seen as highly-valued activities and, despite the challenges of these roles, both represent enjoyable aspects of being an academic. Administration, on the other hand, did not excite respondents but was nevertheless considered to be important for the everyday functioning of the university and an activity that had to be undertaken. The majority of Raddon’s respondents however would, by choice, avoid administrative roles, even where they thought they were good at it. This may partly explain why Deans and Heads may find it difficult to fill semi-formal leadership roles such as Deputy Dean, Deputy Head, Head of Research, Head of Undergraduate/Postgraduate Studies, etc. at the faculty, school and/or departmental level. Our study has found that these semi-formal roles are often conceived of as primarily ‘administrative’, although there are clearly variations across institutions.

2. **Pool of candidates:** Another difficulty related to an insufficient ‘pool’ of appropriate candidates, particularly when recruiting to headship. In the current climate Heads of School/Department have to run mini- (or in some cases quite large, multi-million pound) operations, be good managers of people, good managers of finances, good internal and external communicators, offer academic and strategic leadership and have innovative ideas. Usually the pool from which future Heads are drawn within departments are academics with semi-formal leadership roles, but the gap between a semi-formal role and that of a Head has widened to such an extent that even the most appropriate candidates may feel unprepared for the challenges the role presents. Therefore, there is an increasing need to offer development and support to people prior to taking up headship, not only whilst in it. All of the universities in our sample have introduced initiatives to address these development needs and they are discussed in greater detail in Section 9.

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**FIGURE 6.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUTES TO AND MOTIVATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP &amp; MANAGEMENT FOR ACADEMICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head of Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reluctant leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Good citizen’ leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage limiting leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergent leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>External leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Rotational roles: Even though some ‘old’ universities in our sample have started recruiting to permanent leadership posts, most headships remain rotational and of a limited duration. They may not, therefore, always be seen as a career progression or promotion opportunity many academics would like to pursue, especially as in the rotational system it can be difficult for manager-academics to return to research intensive careers, not least due to the loss of research profile during their term in office. Some academics even saw it as a step back for their career. With rotating headships some academics were concerned about upsetting or causing friction with colleagues by taking tough or unpopular decisions whilst in post and facing the consequences when returning to being a ‘pure’ academic. This fear can inhibit the desire to engage effectively with tough and/or controversial decisions.

4. Impact on research: Another barrier, according to interviewees, is the detrimental effect headship has on research. This is pertinent for all academics, but especially so for early- and late-entry academics who want to develop their research for academic promotion purposes, where the career path is relatively clear, and there is a strong pressure to have their research published in peer-reviewed journals. Thus, spending 3 to 5 years as Head whilst simultaneously trying to develop one’s research portfolio is not seen as an attractive option for many, and may be seen as an undesirable interference and distraction from one’s research and academic career. It was widely felt that provision of a Research Assistant (RA) would help alleviate this situation but that for such an allowance to be tenable within a devolved budgetary system this allocation should be made from central university or faculty level. It is very difficult for a HoS/HoD to issue their own mandate for the recruitment of an RA paid for out of departmental funds.

5. Limited recognition and incentives for taking up headships were reported as a barrier in a number of universities. In half of the universities in our sample (all ‘old’), non-budget holding HoDs were not formally recognised within the organisational management structure and the role did not bear any financial reward. In these institutions, they were seen as informal leaders, coordinating departmental activities rather than line-managing although their responsibilities clearly included HR elements (e.g. performance review). A line-managing and budget-holding HoD role, although formally recognised, bore only limited financial and other incentives with pay increments being discontinued in some instances once an outgoing Head had served his/her term. Interviewees commented that formally recognising all Heads and offering them a better financial reward might raise the status of these leaders and perhaps make the roles more desirable. Despite this, however, most Heads interviewed reported that financial motivation was not a significant factor in their decision to take on the role.

Figure 6.2 summarises the discussion of barriers to taking up a middle level academic leadership role as identified in the interviews.

**FIGURE 6.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BARRIERS TO TAKING UP A MIDDLE LEVEL ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP ROLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HoD/HoS posts are most difficult to fill in ‘old’ universities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Initial limited interest in leadership and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Insufficient ‘pool’ of developed people and people feeling unprepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rotating nature of roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Negative effect on research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Limited recognition and incentives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Despite these barriers, the role of both line-managing/budget-holding as well as informal/coordinating Heads can be a truly influential role within the institution and, as such, offers incumbents the opportunity to leverage significant change and influence within their disciplines and across the institution. Thus, it should be noted that whilst these barriers may still exist, our study also found clear changes in how leadership and leadership roles are beginning to be perceived.

Heads in both ‘old’ and ‘new’ universities in most cases emerged from within the department. The practice of academic election by the vote of a particular constituency was retained only in one university in our sample whilst in the rest, headships had become appointed posts following a nomination. This does not mean however that academics were not consulted; in nearly all cases senior management sought ‘soundings’ from departments as to appropriate internal candidates for such roles.

Until recently, there was rarely much real internal competition for headship roles with usually one, or at best two, candidates and for this very reason, universities often had to compromise when appointing internally and to select someone not necessarily for their leadership skills or qualities but because they were the only one willing to do the job and acceptable to their academic peers. This practice is now changing, with universities increasingly advertising headship posts both internally and externally.

Usually external recruitment for headships happens when there is clearly no one internal willing to do the job or deemed to be able to command the support of the department in question; there is a perceived deep-rooted crisis in a department in terms of relationships among the staff (which the externally appointed Head may not be aware of until he/she takes up the role); there is a plan to introduce a permanent or executive headship in an ‘old’ university or the areas are of particular strategic importance to the institution; or major change, restructuring or reorganisation is planned. Whilst external appointments to headship are currently not a universal practice across all departments in the sample institutions, the intention in the majority of them appears to be moving towards more external recruitment and selection.

Due to the increased complexity of the job, many universities now prefer to draw from the widest possible pool of potential candidates and appoint the best possible person for the job by advertising headships externally. This does not necessarily mean that there is no one appropriate internally to do the job, but the prevailing view is that having internal candidates compete with external ones can raise the status and credibility of Heads as leaders. This is reported to be especially true in cases where the internal candidate is appointed through open recruitment and selection as the process is perceived to be fairer and more equal. However, our study has also uncovered an extreme case where appointment of an external candidate in competition with internal ones in a department perceived to be in crisis led to more confrontations and conflicts. To avoid cases such as this therefore it seems important to set out clearly the job and person specifications which underpin the appointment process, offer constructive feedback to each unsuccessful candidate, and discuss what support and development the institution is prepared to offer to the unsuccessful internal candidate to prepare for a similar role in the future.

A number of ‘old’ and ‘new’ institutions visited have appointed Heads who have already held a similar position in a different university. This may be taken as an attempt to minimise risk by appointing somebody who has already clearly acquired leadership and management experience and has a track record of being able to do the job well. The fact that external candidates who have had formal leadership and management experience at headship level apply for a comparable post in a different university also serves as evidence of a stronger emergence of career-track manager-academics and individuals potentially reaching a ‘glass ceiling’ at a younger age in their own institutions.

Furthermore, external candidates for headship are not only drawn from other HEIs but also from the private and other public sectors. Senior institutional managers reported that by appointing people from outside the higher education sector they wish to further encourage change, facilitate innovation and entrepreneurial activities within their institutions.

The terms of appointment to headship in ‘old’ universities are becoming more diverse and increasingly negotiated on an individual basis with some appointments becoming permanent and others remaining fixed-term. In the ‘old’ universities visited for this study permanent Heads are normally recruited for large-size strategically important schools/departments with large budgets and large numbers of staff and students and in many cases, but not exclusively, in more vocationally oriented areas (e.g. Health). As for fixed-term rotational headships there is a move in universities not to
impose a standard duration and each individual case is open to consultation. Although there are clearly variations across universities, the duration of a fixed-term rotational headship has generally increased.

As for semi-formal leadership roles (Deputy Dean, Deputy Head, Head of Research, Head of Undergraduate/Postgraduate Studies, etc.), our findings are similar to those of Barrett and Barrett\(^96\), as whilst in some of our cases interviewees reported that academics generally try to avoid such responsibilities (particularly in ‘old’ universities), in others an awareness of promotion prospects made staff more willing to take them on. Also, in most cases semi-formal leadership and management responsibilities are offset by lighter teaching loads\(^97\).

6.3.2 Recruiting and appointing senior-level academic leaders

Compared to headships, filling more senior academic leadership positions such as those of Dean of Faculty/School, DVC/PVC or their equivalent presents less difficulty in the universities visited:

1. **Pool of candidates**: One of the main reasons of why it is not so difficult to recruit to senior roles is that a smaller number of them is required. There is already a pool of leaders and manager-academics with a proven track-record of leadership and management at the faculty and departmental levels, who may wish to move on to leadership and management at a more senior level either within their own or another institution.

2. **Research profile**: Many academics who decide to become a Dean, DVC/PVC or equivalent often have a well-established research profile and are under less pressure to keep up high research productivity. They can afford to spend less time on it and still maintain their reputation. In a number of institutions senior manager-academics maintained a certain level of research; this generally occurred where they were still embedded within their school or department, had professional managerial support, were given research support via their own RA and did not have significant teaching loads to contend with. In such instances, Deans and DVCs/PVCs seemed happy to have found a balance between their role as an academic and as a manager.

3. **Career progression**: More senior leadership roles may also be seen as more appealing as they can clearly be regarded as a career progression. Interestingly, it was felt that some senior roles, particularly cross-cutting and coordinating Deans and DVCs/PVCs may actually be less demanding than those of Head of School/Department as they have less direct financial and line-managing responsibility and clearer lines of accountability.

4. **Clarity of purpose**: Some Heads of School/Department felt that leadership roles at the senior level are less challenging because there is generally less conflict of interests than at the middle level. Deans and DVCs/PVCs (or their equivalents) are clearly part of the senior university management structure and their responsibility for a wide range of disciplines may reduce emotional commitment to colleagues within the same subject area. Furthermore, such senior leaders are unlikely to find themselves ‘squeezed’ between allegiance to their academic colleagues and the central university in the way that many Heads feel they are.

5. **Recognition and reward**: Senior leadership roles tend to be clearly defined and formally recognised within the organisational management structure and bear tangible financial rewards. As a number of universities have put senior leaders in an entirely different pay range, the financial incentives may also play some part in filling senior positions without much difficulty.

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**FIGURE 6.3**

**TAKING UP A SENIOR LEADERSHIP ROLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senior posts (Dean, DVC/PVC or their equivalent) less difficult to fill than headships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Limited number required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Existing pool of leaders with proven track record of leadership and established research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Career progression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some senior roles perceived to be less demanding with less conflict of interests than at the middle level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Formal recognition and financial rewards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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96 Barrett, P. and Barrett, L. (2007)
97 For more details on the management of academic workloads see Barrett, P. and Barrett, L. (2007). Details can be found at www.lfhe.ac.uk/research/projects
The discussion in this section can be summarised as in Figure 6.3. Whereas, in previous decades, Deans and DVCs/PVCs in most older institutions were typically elected or appointed internally, now appointments are both internal and external. Only in the minority of institutions in our sample were all DVCs/PVCs exclusively drawn from within the institution. As noted in Section 5.6, the Registrar/Secretary and Directors of central functional departments (e.g. Finance, HR, IT and marketing) are mainly recruited externally from within the higher education sector, industry, or the public sector98.

As with Heads selected externally the sample universities increasingly appoint to most senior leadership posts external candidates who have held the same or comparable position in another institution or organisation, placing high expectations on the person’s ability to repeat their success in the new context. This is also true in the case of institutional heads99.

A Guide to Best Practice on appointing senior managers in higher education published by Universities UK100 devotes a section to advantages and disadvantages of internal and external appointments, which resonate with our research findings. Although the guide focuses on senior managers, its key points are also relevant to our earlier discussion on recruitment and appointment to middle-level posts101.

The key potential advantages of limiting appointments to internal candidates relate to the ability of an institution to:

- Map out career paths and development opportunities for staff
- Capitalise on the institutional knowledge of the candidates
- Build expertise internally
- Benefit from the valuable role that internally appointed Deans, DVCs/PVCs or equivalent can perform in bridging the gap between central management and Heads of School/Department.

The key potential advantages of extending recruitment externally, on the other hand, can include:

- Drawing from a wider pool of candidates
- Drawing on a broader variety of expertise and experience
- Promoting greater diversity and equality within the organisation.

It is clear that potential advantages of internal recruitment can also be potential disadvantages of external recruitment and vice-versa. This is the reason why the majority of HEIs in our sample have moved from primarily internal appointments to the posts of Dean and DVC/PVC (or equivalent) to both internally and externally advertised fixed-term and permanent posts.

The increase in external appointments has also led to an extensive use of search consultants when recruiting and appointing to leadership and management posts. Their use is no longer limited to the most senior posts (Dean, DVC/PVC, VC/Principal), a number of universities now use search consultants when recruiting people to middle-level leadership roles and even professorships, particularly when they prove hard to fill or are of particular strategic importance. The interviewees noted that even when there are external advertisements in the national/international press or on the internet, candidates are most likely to apply when approached directly. The intention expressed by many universities is to extend the use of search consultants more widely to middle-level leadership and management positions. The benefits of using search consultants may include reaching a wider pool of candidates, drawing on independent recruitment and selection expertise, and reducing the administrative and staff time burden on the institution102.

Appointing to fixed-term rotating and permanent posts of Dean and DVC/PVC (or equivalent) can have both positive and negative implications. Again, although the discussion here is about appointments to more senior roles, many of the points raised are also clearly pertinent for middle-level leadership posts. Fixed-term rotating appointments can appeal to a wider group of individuals who may wish their remit to cover broader leadership and management activities for a limited period (at least to try it out initially) and following that, individuals can feel free to return to more traditional academic work should they so desire. On the other hand, if a university finds someone who is really good and effective as a leader and manager-academic it can be disadvantageous not to capitalise on their leadership expertise over a longer term. Moreover, as many interviewees pointed out, with rotating appointments after people have learned the job in the first year, have become quite good at it in the second year, by the third year they often have to get ready to step down. Universities are increasingly coming to realise that there is a pressing need for succession planning (see Section 9).

98 For more details on the roles and careers of professional managers see Whitchurch, C. (2006a, 2006b)
99 On the role of VCs see Breakwell, G. (2006). Details can be found at www.lfhe.ac.uk/research/projects
100 Universities UK (2004)
Having permanent leadership and management posts, on the other hand, means that leadership development can be about helping people develop business and shape the fabric of the institution, changing their personal styles and techniques as the context in which they operate changes. Leadership development can be more long-term with staff developers getting to know formal leaders better throughout the years and building relationships rather than having a continuous job of developing new people for rotating roles.

In all institutions visited, the VC/Principal has enormous scope in how he/she distributes leadership within his/her team at any particular time. To retain the best internal people and/or appoint the best external candidates, the VC/Principal will often review portfolios and re-organise the senior leadership team to meet the specific demands, preferences and set of skills and expertise of the successful candidates. For instance, DVC/PVC roles often change and are negotiated depending on individual career aspirations, policy context, institutional priorities, strategy, new expectations and demands. For these reasons across sample institutions, there is enormous diversity of role at DVC/PVC level as well as in the composition of top team structures103.

From the interviews it is clear that many academics who have chosen a career track as a manager-academic are not simply interested in progression to any senior role, but are very specific in identifying what institutional area they would like to lead at the higher level and, as noted in Section 5, the roles they identify do not always fall neatly within the existing university management structure. Since the fieldwork was completed, for instance, in at least one institution in our sample a new senior post in an area that one of the interviewees identified as wishing to have in the future has been created to exactly match his particular interest, skills and expertise, and this is not an isolated example.

It is impossible in the discussion presented here to cover all the peculiarities, complexities and nuances that exist across the 12 sample HEIs. It is important however to note that the nature of leadership roles in universities varies significantly between those that are line-managing and budget-holding and those that bear cross-cutting and coordinating responsibilities.

6.4 Selection criteria

The interviewees highlighted that academic excellence which typically means being excellent at research and/or teaching was previously the primary, if not the sole, criterion for selecting an individual for a formal leadership position, but a recent development in a number of universities in our sample is the introduction of a competency framework for the selection and development of formal leaders. Such frameworks are not necessarily about defining a set of competencies and skills per se, but about standards, expectations, performance and behaviours expected of formal leaders.

To make the process of appointments clearer and more transparent a number of universities in our sample have developed Competency Frameworks for Heads of Department and other professional and academic leaders that clearly indicate expectations about leadership and management ability. These frameworks are used as a benchmark against which to measure institutional leadership capacity, to select and appoint new leaders, assess future leadership potential, and to design and implement leadership and management development provision. They highlight the growing significance attributed to the role of middle manager-academics in shaping, influencing and implementing university strategy and, in each case, cover a range of skills and abilities broadly aligned to the ‘Four C Leadership’ model used by the Leadership Foundation’s Top Management Programme (TMP) 360° feedback process as outlined below.

1. Credibility: the interviewees talked a great deal about the importance of earning the respect of colleagues to be successful as a leader at all levels. Crucial to gaining this respect, especially when asking colleagues to improve their own practice, appears to be credibility, which comes from a variety of sources, including:

   • Credibility (but not necessarily excellence) as an academic, who continues to do research, publish and teach
   • Credibility as an expert in a professional field in cases where leaders are drawn from outside the higher education sector to lead more vocationally oriented areas in HEIs or professional services
   • Credibility as a leader displaying a genuine interest in a diverse range of academic disciplines especially in cases where various discipline-based departments are merged to form larger units
   • Credibility as a believer in seeing a leadership role as a genuine opportunity to make a difference and work hard on behalf of department/school/university
   • Credibility as a leader who takes the right, courageous and, sometimes, unpopular decisions rather than the easy ones and sees beyond immediate priorities to develop a long-term view of the department/school/university’s future.

103 For more details on composition of top team structures in UK higher education see Kennie, T. and Woodfield, S. (2007); and on the changing nature of DVC/PVC roles see Smith, D. et al (2007). Details can be found at www.lfhe.ac.uk/research/projects
2. **Capability:** the criteria on capability relate to strategic vision, planning and organising in a wide range of areas, including:

- Capability to see and contribute to the ‘big picture’, be strategically focused and identify opportunities for enhancing the reputation of department/faculty/university by seeing beyond the internal context
- Capability to identify and effectively manage complex problems and issues relating to research, teaching and third stream activities
- Capability to manage finances and resources and identify opportunities for enhancing financial security of department/school/university
- Capability to clarify competing priorities by focusing individual and team energies on what matters most
- Capability to take responsibility and control to ensure that individual/department/faculty/university’s objectives are met.

3. **Character:** the criteria for character and personality of a leader are seen by the interviewees as being just as important as credibility and capability. The criteria identified by the interviewees include:

- **Integrity:** this relates to a leader giving his/her full respect to others, regardless of their status or standing, treating all staff fairly and equally and with dignity and acting as a personal role model of the leadership behaviours
- **Distinctiveness:** this characteristic relates to a leader bringing a real sense of energy, passion and excitement to the workplace in order to create a stimulating environment for people to think creatively and use their abilities and imagination to develop and implement new ideas that add value to the organisation
- **Exceptional interpersonal and communication skills:** these are very important for a leader to build and maintain good working relationships with his/her colleagues at all levels, create a positive work environment, listen genuinely to colleagues’ views before making his/her mind up, discuss openly the difficult issues staff may face, recognise and understand other people’s emotions, tackle the problems of under-performance and resolve conflict situations
- **Resilience:** this concerns the ability of a leader to bounce back in the face of setbacks and remain positive by putting his/her personal feelings to one side, especially in interpersonally charged situations. This is perhaps more important at the HoD level where obstacles encountered in the role are numerous and complex and come from criticism, negative feedback from disgruntled colleagues and demands of the job
- **Personal style:** this characteristic relates to a leader being flexible and adapting his/her personal style and approach easily to respond to the demands of different contexts, situations and audiences (academic and managerial staff, university leaders and managers, students and other stakeholders).

4. **Career tactics:** This relates to a mix of self-management attributes and managing organisational politics to advance one’s agenda and objectives, including:

- **Having ambition to progress:** the interviewees noted that being asked to be a formal leader was a sign of recognition and respect. It is flattering and makes people feel good about their achievements. As noted above, after being a Dean/Head, the majority of academics interviewed have an ambition to progress on a formal leadership and management route. Also, a number of DVCs/PVCs expressed their desire to become a VC in the future. The majority of VCs interviewed said that they had honest and open conversations with their Deans/DVCs/PVCs as to their leadership career aspirations and provided support and guidance in their development
- **Coming to the role at the right time:** a question often asked when selecting a leader concerns the time in one’s career, i.e. whether the time is right for an individual to become a formal leader. In the build-up to the next RAE this was particularly important for research stars whom universities often felt reluctant to charge with formal leadership and management responsibilities in order not to affect their research productivity
- **Managing time effectively:** all interviewees noted that one of the major problems for formal leaders is finding time to do a whole myriad of tasks and activities that a leadership role requires. There is a need for leaders excellent self-management skills and an ability to prioritise and manage their time effectively
- **Managing change:** Formal leaders need to demonstrate a good understanding of changing policies and objectives, recognise the need for change for department/faculty/university and communicate the benefits of change to others. They also need to prepare and support others during periods of change and understand how to achieve change within and through people.
This list is certainly not exhaustive and each leadership appointment is decided on an individual basis. The Universities UK Guide stipulates that ‘in order to ensure that the best person is appointed it is essential to set out clearly the roles and responsibilities associated with the post (job specification) as well as the skills, qualifications, experience and attributes being sought in the new post holder (person specification)’.

Some HR directors and staff developers were less convinced that explicit competency frameworks would work in their organisations, whilst others used an institutional leadership and management strategy or list of skills and areas, although not closely defined, to guide the selection process and leadership development. However, a few were in the process or planned to define clear standards setting out necessary skills and associated behaviours. Since such a framework can be a delicate and contentious issue in the academic context, however, developing and implementing any formal framework of this sort will require wider university consultation and discussion with current leaders and managers. One staff developer suggested that the Leadership Foundation should drive standards around leadership and management in HEIs in the same way as the Higher Education Academy has produced its professional standards for teaching.

### 6.5 Key points

The key findings from this section are summarised in Figure 6.4.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>FROM</th>
<th>TO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three typical routes to leadership and management (from Deem, 2001)</td>
<td>Great diversity of routes to and motivations for leadership and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reluctant manager initially, especially in ‘old’ universities</td>
<td>Career manager over time due to enjoyment of the role, power, research pressures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited interest in leadership and management owing to cultural and organisational barriers</td>
<td>Despite barriers, increased interest in leadership and management roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deanship and headship as ‘operational’ and ‘administrative’, a steward</td>
<td>Deanship and headship is more strategic and empowering, a leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amateur leaders and manager-academics</td>
<td>Need to ‘professionalise’ leaders and manager-academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HoDs, Deans, DVCs/PVCs usually emerge from within the institution</td>
<td>The posts are increasingly advertised externally. Enormous diversity and flux at DVC/PVC level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only rotating leadership roles (in ‘old’ universities)</td>
<td>A mixture of fixed-term rotating and permanent leadership roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typically standardised approach to fixed-term rotating leadership roles</td>
<td>Individual approach and terms to fixed-term appointments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typically appointing leaders and manager-academics new to a particular role</td>
<td>Increasingly appointing leaders and manager-academics who have had comparable role in another HEI or organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defined roles and portfolios for DVCs/PVCs</td>
<td>More fluid roles, negotiated on individual basis due to context, priorities, strategy, career tactics and to retain/recruit the best leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search consultants used only for senior management posts, particularly VC/Principal</td>
<td>Search consultants used for both senior as well as middle levels. Intention to use search consultants more extensively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic excellence as the primary selection criteria</td>
<td>Selecting on ‘Four C Leadership Higher Education’ including credibility, capability, character and career tactics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. SHARING LEADERSHIP

This section of the report presents findings about the distribution of leadership within the 12 universities studied and perceptions of leadership as a shared/collective activity.

7.1 Overview

Amongst all interviewees there was a sense that leadership was in some way distributed within the university. Thus, both strategic and operational responsibility and influence are taken at all levels, from top-level strategic initiatives to the delivery of programmes and bidding for research funding. Furthermore, the boundary between academic and support functions appears to be increasingly blurred, with all parties influencing strategic and operational direction (although there seems to be more opportunity for this at junior academic than junior administrative levels). The level of autonomy for leadership at the school/department level seems to be closely linked to financial control models, with greater power and influence in those institutions where schools/departments are the primary budget-holding entities and in charge of how surpluses are spent or invested. Alongside this distributed leadership, however, there is also a clear desire for strong and inspiring leadership from individuals in key roles. This can help give a sense of common purpose and direction, engender a sense of trust and openness, encourage communication and dialogue and create an innovative and supportive culture in which initiatives can flourish. There is a general sense that this leadership should be facilitative and credible (often determined by prior teaching and/or research performance). Despite a degree of resistance to ‘managerialism’ per se there is a widespread acceptance of the need for a more professional and effective management and leadership approach that builds on the strengths of the organisation. The inter-connection between distributed and individual leadership can mean that certain people (even those not in formal leadership roles – e.g. star researchers) can have a disproportionately large influence within the organisation and stories of their successes and/or failures constitute a substantial part of the narrative fabric of the organisation.

7.2 Perceptions of distributed leadership

In intention, there was a great degree of support amongst all interviewees for leadership which is shared across the institution. It was interesting to note that even though the researchers deliberately did not provide the interviewees with a strict definition of the concept of ‘distributed leadership’, there was a considerable degree of commonality in the views and perceptions expressed about the idea. The majority of interviewees considered that distributed leadership was not just conceivable within the higher education context, but a necessity – that it is a function that is too complex and important to leave to a small group of individuals in formal roles. Despite this, however, analysis of responses revealed a number of variations in the way in which distributed leadership was being conceived, largely dependent on the context, task, structures and personalities of significant individuals. These classifications broadly match those identified by MacBeath et al in schools as indicated below:

1. **Formal**: devolution of financial and administrative authority to schools and/or departments.
2. **Pragmatic**: negotiating the division of responsibilities between roles such as VC and DVC or HoS and Deputy HoS (often with one becoming external facing and the other internal facing).
3. **Strategic**: the appointment of people from outside the university to bring in new skills, knowledge and contacts (particularly in the case of the appointment of professional managers from outside the sector).
4. **Incremental**: progressive opportunities for experience and responsibility such as sitting on and chairing committees; leading modules, programmes and projects; serving as a deputy.
5. **Opportunistic**: people willingly taking on additional responsibilities within and outside the university (e.g. heading up project teams; sitting on academic, professional and/or editorial boards; consulting and liaising with business and policy makers).
6. **Cultural**: leadership is assumed and shared organically such as in the development of a collaborative research bid.

Whilst recognising these dimensions, however, we gathered no evidence to imply a continuum or progression from formal to cultural distribution; rather these forms coexist and support one another as different manifestations of shared leadership, for example, formal distribution serving to facilitate cultural and opportunistic distribution. Leadership was generally seen to be distributed but within certain boundaries. It was believed that distribution of leadership was formal as well as informal and the form that it took largely depended on the sphere of activity.
Formal distribution of leadership was reported to be most evident in the general area of governance and management. For instance, when asked about how distributed leadership worked in practice in their institutions, interviewees frequently referred to formal organisational systems and structures whereby decision-making authority and responsibility for aspects of university management is devolved or delegated via formally designated channels. Responsibility for such activities is usually vested in the holders of formal positions (such as Head or Dean) whether or not they choose to execute the activity alone or in collaboration with others. Formal meetings and committees were also seen by many as systematic ways of sharing leadership whereby academics and managers are brought together to make joint decisions (even though some scepticism was expressed as to whether or not the true source of power fell outside such groups). Because of these formal structures, it was noted that whilst leadership may at first seem distributed, in reality there remains significant control from the centre/top of the organisation (the extent varying between institutions).

Although some authors argue that delegation and devolution should not be confused with distributed leadership because they imply individual, top-down rather than collective, bottom-up influence, we found that these were by far the most frequently cited mechanisms through which leadership is shared within universities. In terms of devolution, the location of financial control (i.e. budget holders) was widely viewed as the most important, if not decisive, feature in the distribution of leadership. Thus, whilst it may often be the case that administration and workload are devolved rather than power and authority, financial devolution to the school/departmental level is central to the empowerment of HoSs/HoDs and financial transparency is a key factor in the development of an entrepreneurial culture. In effect, without devolution of financial control it is unlikely that a culture of shared or ‘distributed’ leadership will flourish – it would appear that collaborative behaviour is correlated with collaborative access to resources.

Remaining with MacBeath et al’s model, the area where leadership is most likely to be ‘cultural’, where academics willingly take the initiative to lead and where leadership is assumed rather than given, is research. The opportunities to lead in this area are numerous; in research, academics who are not necessarily in formal leadership or management positions, lead by their academic credibility and enthusiasm and anyone who is willing and able to carry out the initiative can do so (rather than relying on a designated post-holder). Leadership in this area was represented by the interviewees as spontaneous, opportunistic and dispersed rather than formally devolved. This raises the question of whether such a bottom-up approach to leadership could be utilised more widely in other areas (such as teaching or business/community engagement) and if not, why not. Whilst part of the answer clearly lies within the organisational processes and personal dispositions, our findings would lead us to believe that another significant dimension is that of ‘social identity’. It would appear that within the field of research, at least, it is possible for academics to take on managerial responsibilities without sensing a tension between their identities as an ‘academic’ (i.e. member of a peer group allied to a specific discipline) and as a ‘manager’ or ‘leader’ (i.e. member of a group with responsibilities allied to a specific organisation and the achievement of particular tasks). By contrast, the accounts of holders of more formal organisational posts, such as Head/Dean, would indicate that at times there is a marked tension between these two roles where one is torn between allegiance to one’s academic colleagues (the discipline) and the broader university (organisation). Within our own study, such tensions were most evident during a period of industrial action where HoSs were expected to address organisational concerns about exam marking whilst also facing the same concerns as their colleagues about pay and working conditions for academic staff.

**HoS, Pre-1992 University:** “I had to resign [from the Union]. It got to a point where my position was just untenable. I couldn’t be seen in their eyes to be undermining my colleagues, which is effectively what I was having to do trying to protect the students. I found the situation just simply untenable so I publicly told them I was resigning, and have done so. That was much more liberating then because I felt freer to take actions that I felt as a HoS I have to take.”

### 7.3 Processes of distributed leadership

In terms of the processes of distributed leadership within a particular level, in most universities members of the Senior/Middle Management Team have well-defined portfolios and responsibilities, and in this sense, the formal responsibilities are perceived to be distributed among the team members. As for promoting and trying to achieve ‘concertive action’, a number of Senior Management Teams in universities in our sample reported that they have been
trying to develop a ‘team leadership’ approach at the centre/top with the explicit intent of providing a role model that can be cascaded to other parts of the organisation, although the extent to which this happens, or affects how Heads of School/Department conduct their activities, is hard to verify.

Whilst team members may be conscious of being part of a team some may decide to opt out when it does not suit them. One senior university leader, for example, commented that when responsibilities and portfolios are tightly defined it may be problematic to get ownership from everybody in the team as when one individual is responsible for a particular area and promotes a certain vision for that area, it may be seen to be his/her vision only and not that of the group. In this sense, when responsibilities are strongly segmented there was reported to be a tendency for people to start building rivalries and a ‘silo-approach’ to management. The contrast to this would be the Senior Management Team in another university, where the responsibilities amongst senior team members are ‘fuzzy’ and not tightly defined thus allowing the VC and his/her team to be engaged in every single activity and to obtain a broader understanding of what is happening throughout the university. Responsibilities are delegated rather than permanently devolved depending on the context, situation and project (with roles and responsibilities remaining clear but changing). Developing a vision for a particular area becomes the responsibility of the whole team rather than one individual. Thus, it would seem that, building a well-functioning top team is one of the ways to embed distributed leadership in practice.

A similar interpretation of distributed leadership is evident in a study of UK VCs in which Bargh et al110 argue that at this level:

“Leadership, if it is to be successfully accomplished, can rarely be a solitary activity and involves the constant interaction with colleagues in the pursuit of a ‘shared’ vision of reality consistent with broader institutional goals.”

The authors suggest that setting strategic direction and vision for the university can not be a simple case of senior leaders acting alone but requires working together with senior managers and others in the pursuit of a common purpose for their universities.

Whilst senior university managers may formally devolve leadership to lower levels of the organisation, whether distribution penetrates below the HoS or HoD level depends largely on the leadership style of the head of that unit. Whilst the majority of HoSs and HoDs in our study did not feel reluctant to push distribution further down the school/department, several Heads did find it quite difficult to ‘let go’ of certain elements of their control, power and responsibility to other members within their units. Some Heads find it difficult to have sufficient trust in others and not to be ‘hands-on’ and in control as, even when they distribute some of their authority and responsibility, it is ultimately they who are held accountable. Others thought that academics should be protected from undertaking anything other than their primary job of research and teaching or were uncertain about what powers and responsibilities to give to staff below the HoS and HoD level. In contrast, some HoSs were reluctant to relinquish responsibilities to professional managers/administrators (e.g. School Managers) appointed to work alongside them, although the majority welcomed it as an opportunity to concentrate more effort on strategic leadership and research.

Whilst there is support for a distributed style of leadership, the majority of interviewees also mentioned the need for having a formal leader and leadership team who can provide a clear vision and direction. Having ‘inspirational’ and ‘visionary’ leadership at the top, in the words of many interviewees, is as important as cultivating a collective leadership approach. It is interesting to note here that the interviews still indicate the alignment with ‘traditional’ depictions of leadership. One HoS, for example, said: “we have very exciting and visionary people at the senior level and in turn it means that we stretch ourselves”. Clear vision and direction coming from a formal leader or senior team was seen as one of the main pre-requisites for distributed leadership to work in practice. It gives people confidence to explore new opportunities because they are given direction by the vision that these leaders are setting and effectively ‘authorised’ to engage in such activities. However, there still needs to be open and genuine consultation and discussion of where the university is going, with the inspirational leader(s) acting as a physical embodiment of the vision/purpose of the organisation, rather like Howell and Shamir’s111 representation of socialised charismatic leadership.

The view of distributed leadership as complementary rather than an alternative to traditional hierarchical/individual leadership is echoed in similar research conducted in the further education sector whereby it was concluded that there is a preference for a ‘blended leadership’ approach that combines elements of both forms.

7.4 Benefits and challenges of distributed leadership

Gronn\textsuperscript{113} expresses a concern that as distributed leadership becomes a preferred approach to leadership in organisations, attention to the potential benefits and disadvantages may be neglected. We therefore asked the interviewees in our sample about what they saw as the main benefits and challenges of this approach.

With regards to benefits, interviewees generally believed that a well managed distributed approach to leadership can bring many benefits to the academic/professional unit and ultimately the university. These benefits are closely connected and one often cannot happen without the other. What follows is certainly not an exhaustive list, as the benefits of distributed leadership would depend on the particular organisational culture and context, but these four benefits were most frequently cited by our interviewees.

1. \textbf{Responsiveness:} it was argued that by distributing leadership to lower levels of the organisation, decision-making becomes more responsive and ‘in-tune’ to the needs and expectations of both customers (students, business, etc.) and staff. Furthermore, as greater responsibility and accountability is devolved, increasing ownership and consideration is given to issues affecting schools and departments.

2. \textbf{Transparency:} another benefit reported by interviewees has been an increase in financial transparency whereby it is far clearer how income is earned and spent. Such a shift is seen as central to enhancing levels of innovation and entrepreneurship within schools and departments so that those responsible can reap the benefit of their work.

3. \textbf{Convenience:} distributed leadership is also said to bring ‘managerial convenience’. As noted above, over recent years, universities have become much more complex as organisations and their activities more varied and diverse. For this reason, distributed leadership offers a means for sharing the burden of responsibility.

4. \textbf{Teamwork:} distributed leadership can also facilitate better teamwork and relationships between academics and professional managers/administrators. From a distributed perspective, it is not only academics who are involved in decision-making but all staff groups across the institution. It can also enhance communication throughout the organisation as interaction stops being only top-down and occurs in all directions (vertical and horizontal).

With regard to challenges and disadvantages, in the view of those institutional leaders who were interviewed, distributed leadership should not present many problems provided that it is managed well and in a transparent way. With regard to the potential disadvantages, however, the following points were raised:

1. \textbf{Fragmentation:} most frequently cited was the potential for the creation of ‘silos’, with different parts of the university going in their own direction. Without an overarching organisational structure, shared vision that is actively communicated and enacted by the centre, and coherent and integrated organisational procedures, distributed leadership may result in faculties, schools, departments and/or individuals doing completely different things, so leading to fragmentation of the university.

2. \textbf{Lack of role clarity:} distributed leadership may also result in a lack of clarity over division of roles and create opportunities for confusion and competition. This situation in our sample universities tended to be most strongly felt for cross-cutting roles at the university, faculty or school level. Thus, for example, there may be confusion over the relative roles and responsibilities of the PVC for Research (university-level), Dean of Research (faculty-level) and Head of Research (school-level). Role ambiguity was particularly keenly experienced in universities where financial management was devolved to the school/departmental level, in which case faculty and university level roles (especially PVC/Dean) held significantly less budgetary and line-management responsibility than HoSs/HoDs. In this case, although nominal lines of accountability run between the HoS/HoD and VC via the PVC/Dean there is ample opportunity to bypass this and, in effect, cut the PVC/Dean out of the loop. Whilst flexibility and openness of roles may support distributed leadership, there is the potential for this to become disruptive.

3. \textbf{Slow decision-making:} as distributed leadership implies that more people should be involved in the leadership process, decision making in the organisation may slow

\textsuperscript{112} Collinson, M. and Collinson, D. (2006a) 10 – initial emphasis

\textsuperscript{113} Gronn, P. (2002)
Partly for this reason, it was sometimes argued that senior managers may use distributed leadership as mere rhetoric, whilst continuing to make decisions in a fairly top-down manner.

4. **Variations in individual capability:** distributed leadership may also underestimate individual differences in ability, leading to unrealistic expectations of performance and the risk of leadership failures where people fail to take on responsibility/ownership and/or perform poorly.

Interestingly, these benefits and challenges imply a somewhat ‘managerialist’ (top-down) approach to the distribution of leadership whereby organisational impacts dominate the discourse. Whilst this is perhaps unsurprising, given the fact that all interviewees were holders of formal management roles, it gives strong clues as to how the discourse is being framed within the higher education arena. This is particularly true of the potential disadvantages identified. Thus, rather than fragmentation, advocates of the ‘concertive action’ approach would argue that distributed leadership should lead to greater cohesion and a sense of common purpose; rather than lack of clarity, individuals should be better enabled to negotiate and agree their roles so as to minimise overlap and maximise personal fit; rather than slowing down decision making, such an approach should enable decisions to be made more rapidly, at the point of contact rather than further up the hierarchy; and with regards to capability, distributed leadership should assume a differentiation rather than commonality of expertise, drawing on individual strengths rather than depending solely on formal ‘leaders’.

7.5 **Distributed leadership in practice**

It has been discussed how, during the course of our interviews, analysis and interpretation, we noticed a number of clear tensions within university leadership and some clear pressure points where this is most strongly experienced (particularly at the HoS/HoD level). Furthermore, we noticed a large number of descriptions of leadership in higher education that appear to arise largely from these tensions and challenges and the manner in which leadership is distributed across the organisation. These descriptions offer competing accounts to managerially-led ‘devolved’ leadership or emergent and collective ‘dispersed’ leadership. A selection of these is outlined below and offers an alternative, perhaps more ‘realistic’, description of leadership practice in higher education.

1. **Dislocated:** top-down and bottom-up systems do not match up; leadership does not occur where it is needed. For example, weakened central leadership where budgets are devolved to schools or faculties that make it difficult to initiate and sustain institution-wide initiatives such as corporate branding and IT.

2. **Disconnected:** different parts of the institution pulling in different directions; lack of consistent/coherent direction/vision; competing agendas. For example, formation of a ‘silo mentality’ within schools with devolved budgets pursuing their own objectives, not aligned with (or even counter to) the overall university mission and objectives.

3. **Disengaged:** staff disengage from management processes; may be disenfranchised, disenchanted, disinterested; leadership seen as unappealing, unrewarding or unnecessary. For example, leadership viewed as administration/bureaucracy rather than strategic and inter-personal.

4. **Dissipated:** leadership is too broadly diffused across groups with little accountability or responsibility for implementing decisions and actions. This was a frequent criticism of the committee structure, described as a ‘washing machine’ where decisions go round and round remaining unresolved and disowned.

5. **Distant:** leadership is felt to be removed from the operational level of the organisation; inaccessible, imposed; not necessarily ‘in our best interests’. For example, decisions taken at senior management level and imposed with limited consultation. This situation seems to be amplified where senior managers are physically removed from academic departments.

6. **Dysfunctional:** leadership fails to achieve its intentions; results in unexpected/undesirable outcomes; misalignment of performance measures. For example, negative reaction to performance review and appraisal process by senior academic staff; performance measures driving individual rather than team behaviour; risk aversion and dysfunctional systems arising from failures of senior leadership.

Such descriptions seem more aligned with the lived experience of managers and academics in UK universities. They reflect the frustrations at where leadership is felt to be inappropriate or ineffective and also point to the complexities and multiple interpretations of leadership in higher education. The quotes overleaf give an explicit account of such tensions within one university, revealing the perspectives of three leaders at different levels. Thus, we see
VC: “I’m a strong believer in devolved responsibility and putting accountability and responsibility where it matters… You can run an institution like this by command and control, but not for very long before it breaks down. The trick isn’t to devolve the responsibility, but to get it accepted, especially when times are hard and it’s difficult to get people to share in the responsibility of making tough decisions… One of the most difficult things a VC has to do is to balance the business of central direction and control with devolving responsibility, and getting that balance right. I suspect some of the Deans here would say the balance is tipped slightly too far towards devolved responsibility and not enough towards strong central leadership. They would, however, only agree with that if the central leadership was in the direction that they wanted to go in. If it wasn’t in the direction they wanted to go in I expect they’d argue the reverse. I think that exemplifies the difficulty of getting the balance right, and it’s a constant trade-off. Resource allocation in the university reflects that because it’s about how much you distribute to the schools that earn the money and how much you retain centrally to fund new initiatives and programmes and things like that. That is a constant juggling act for a VC in a university and it’s more difficult to do that in a university than in many other sorts of organisations because our reputation doesn’t depend on a particular product, it depends on all the individual staff and they have to be empowered to develop that reputation and share it with the university… The reputation depends on everybody and I think that’s the fundamental reason why it has to be based on devolved responsibility and trust.”

PVC: “The point about leadership and my perception of it is that I think it’s quite dislocated, and I think that goes back to the difficulties that they had. The previous VC has left his mark on this institution. On my first day here I went to see the Deputy VC to say hello. I was in his office for two hours and what happened was deeply ingrained and he was quite bitter about it. I think he’d been PVC at the time and he’d lived through it all and it had obviously scarred him. Universities have long memories and I think that has influenced how things are set up here. There is a good example of a leader in the VC, who I think is very impressive, but I don’t think the structures affect clear lines of communication or decision-making. The university presents itself at one level as very devolved, so its budget is based on a devolved method and the Deans in schools are perceived at one level to have a lot of autonomy. But because they’re not engaged in decision-making at the higher level, they’re also slightly disenfranchised from the corporate side of the university.”

HoS: “The school is very much led in a consensual fashion, but the university isn’t. The leadership style of the university is non-consensual, hierarchical and bureaucratic. It doesn’t build consensus and it’s largely insensitive and distant. Some of them are really nice people and if they came down from on high and talked to people every now and then I think they’d get on a lot better and build a better consensus. They don’t know, or appear to want to understand sometimes, and that’s very sad. It’s a huge distinguishing difference between the two and it’s partly why I’m quite happy here. I’m sort of shielded by the Dean from that next level and I don’t really want to be open to it; I think I’d rather stay shielded.”

the VC grappling with the tensions of devolution and centralised control, having preference for a devolved model but recognising that this might be perceived as lack of clarity/direction by people lower down the organisation. The PVC acknowledges these tensions and the endeavours of the VC to address them but recognises that formal communication and decision-making structures within the university remain largely influenced by the legacy of a previous VC and this, in turn, shapes how the Senior Management Team is perceived. And the HoS paints the picture of a major division between leadership within the school and the wider university, with the Dean acting as a gatekeeper or shield.

Thus, the image of leadership appears very different from where one stands within the organisation. This is not just an issue of poor communication, but more fundamentally linked to differences of identity, preferences and dynamics of power and social influence. Furthermore, within the particular institution described here these tensions did not necessarily have adverse effects on organisational performance, on the contrary, of the 12 universities visited during our research this one seemed to have a particularly strong culture, happy and satisfied staff, and sense of place and purpose as a higher education provider within the local, national and international environment. Concepts of leadership therefore, whilst inherently contested, were at least actively debated and explored. The processes of social construction necessarily reveal competing and conflicting accounts of leadership but at least provide a discursive space in which different actors can engage with one another.
To this extent, ‘distributed leadership’ perhaps offers an ideal to which the organisation and its members can aspire; an alternative to the lived experience of dislocation, disconnection, disengagement, dissipation, distance and dysfunctionality. Indeed, the opposites of these descriptions seem much closer to Gronn’s114 notion of ‘concertive action’ than any of MacBeath et al’s115 forms of distributed leadership or the accounts gathered during our own research. Thus, in their descriptions of the negative experiences of leadership interviewees appear to be calling for leadership that is located, connected, engaged, clear/in-focus, close/in-touch and functional/beneficial.

7.6 Key points
Figure 7.1 represents the main findings from this section diagrammatically.

**FIGURE 7.1**

**SHARING LEADERSHIP: KEY POINTS**

- **Distributed/shared leadership**
  - Forms
    - Formal
    - Pragmatic
    - Strategic
    - Incremental
    - Opportunistic
    - Cultural
  - Benefits
    - Responsiveness
    - Transparency
    - Convenience
    - Teamwork
  - Challenges
    - Fragmentation
    - Lack of role clarity
    - Slow decision-making
    - Individual capability
  - Experiences
    - Dislocated
    - Disconnected
    - Disengaged
    - Dissipated
    - Distant
    - Dysfunctional

Leadership may be formally ‘devolved’ or informally ‘dispersed’. Form taken depends on nature of task, organisational structures/processes & personal preferences. Leadership in higher education is shared but within constraints. Leadership in higher education requires a combination of both shared and hierarchical leadership. To this extent ‘distributed leadership’ may be more powerful as a rhetorical device than as an accurate description of leadership practice.

8. FUTURE TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

This section of the report presents findings about future leadership trends and challenges within the 12 universities studied.

8.1 Overview

It was widely acknowledged that the higher education sector in the UK is undergoing a considerable period of change. Within the sector as a whole some of the main challenges include: changes in funding, competition over research profile, shifting demographics, and increasing regulation and scrutiny. Many of these issues are interconnected, such as the introduction of student fees in England as a response to declining central funding leading to greater competition between institutions, increasing emphasis on developing a distinct and desirable university ‘brand’, and greater expectations from students and other stakeholders. All in all, the challenges faced by the sector are placing greater demands on institutions and senior figures within them, greater visibility and accountability and increasing emphasis on the importance of effective management and leadership processes.

The response of sample universities to these challenges differ in respect of their strategic priorities and market orientation, pointing towards a greater diversification and segmentation than may have existed before within the sector. Particular areas in which universities may specialise include greater emphasis on vocational/applied programmes; increasing post-graduate provision (especially executive and/or continuing adult education); primary focus on teaching or research; emphasis on local versus national/international engagement; multi/interdisciplinarity.

8.2 The changing nature and context of higher education

Throughout the interviews, respondents frequently commented on the changing nature of the higher education sector and the challenges this poses to HEIs. Towards the end of the interview they were also given the opportunity to identify future trends and challenges for the sector.

Broadly, the findings match the 15 key strategic challenges identified by the Leadership Foundation in 2004\textsuperscript{116} which include: expansion of student numbers, widening participation, HR issues, IT/e-learning, resources and estates development, governance, sustainability and social/cultural agendas, funding/fees, market positioning/‘brand’, competition/collaboration, enhancing the student experience, research, internationalisation, business/regional/community links, and embedding equality and diversity across all activities. A recent report by the Advanced Institute of Management Research also points to a declining number of people looking for careers in academia and, in particular, those with a long-term career plan within the UK\textsuperscript{117}.

Within our own study, attention was particularly drawn to the following factors:

1. Changing student demographic: the planned growth in student numbers across the UK will involve attracting larger proportions of non-traditional undergraduate students. Most HEIs are looking for significant growth in post-graduate students, a greater number of international students and widening participation to incorporate more students from minority and under-represented social groups. This will result in greater diversity of the student population including age, race, prior-experience, social and cultural background, and English language. Together these will pose new challenges and demands on academic and support staff.

2. Customer focus: with the pressure to increase student numbers, along with rising and differential fee structures, student recruitment will become increasingly competitive. HEIs will need to develop distinctive and attractive ‘brands’ and become more ‘customer focused’ in their engagement both with students and with business and enterprise. The variable fee structure introduced across England in 2006 is already having an effect on the relative incomes of different universities and their ability to attract and retain quality academic and managerial/administrative staff. The delay in the introduction of student fees in Scotland and Wales is, at least temporarily, leading to an increase in local student numbers but may ultimately be hard to sustain because of differing earning capacity between universities charging fees and those not.

3. Professionalisation of services: the two trends highlighted above place increasing importance on professional and support services within universities (including catering, accommodation, estates, student administration, IT services, etc.). In this competitive and customer-centric environment the quality of non-academic provision becomes a central dimension of competitive advantage and hence the profile of such functions is becoming enhanced. There is a general trend

\textsuperscript{116} Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (2004)
\textsuperscript{117} Ivery, C., et al (2007)
4. **Political engagement:** increasing government intervention in terms of regulation, legislation, audit and financing of higher education means that leadership within the sector is becoming increasingly politicised. Senior higher education leaders are now more active than ever before in high-level political debate about the future of the sector and recognise the need to be more ‘political’ in what they do. From our own research it would appear that HEIs in Scotland and Wales are closer and more actively engaged in national policy debates due to their level of access to senior politicians and their relative significance in the national economy than is typical for those in England.

5. **Research orientation:** the 2008 RAE is having a major effect on the research strategy of universities. The pressure to achieve a good rating is higher than ever within research-intensive universities, especially given the anticipated reduction in government research funding for lower-rated institutions. This has led to high academic mobility and turnover in the period leading up to the RAE; increasing efforts within institutions to retain good academic staff and to shed poor performing individuals, groups and departments; and a tendency for academic staff to focus on research outputs and proposals rather than other aspects of the academic role (including leadership and management). Increasingly, institutions have had to specify a clear research strategy and, where it is anticipated that they will not perform highly in the 2008 RAE, identify alternative sources of research funding and/or focus greater strategic attention on teaching and/or community engagement.

6. **Internationalisation and regionalisation:** with the increasing competition for student numbers, universities in our sample are focusing particularly on their profile within the international and regional arenas. In the former instance, some universities are developing overseas campuses and strategic alliances with overseas partners, whilst in the latter, they are growing their regional market through community, business and other initiatives within their local regions.

7. **Interdisciplinarity:** in terms of growth of new teaching and research initiatives much of the emphasis is being placed on inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches. More traditional subject areas are increasingly being held to account for their own profits and loss, thus endangering subjects such as chemistry and classics that are expensive to run and/or attract low student numbers.

8. **Vocationalisation:** alongside interdisciplinarity there appears to be a growth in subjects and activities that have a more vocational dimension. Thus, ‘employability skills’ are a key part of most current programmes and there is an increasing interest in industrial placements and projects.

The 12 universities we studied are responding in varying ways to these pressures, each selecting strategic areas of specialisation. The chosen approach will depend on a wide range of contextual factors including areas of strength, weakness and strategic advantage. Key considerations however tend to cover the following factors:

1. **Location:** universities located within or near large urban conurbations tend to be pursuing widening participation and community outreach agendas more actively than others. This is in part to do with maximising the locally-available client population; engaging with the greater ethnic mix within such areas; and responding to increased regional competition between HEIs. The variations between political and funding structures across countries and to a lesser extent regions (e.g. opportunity to attract European Structural Funds Objective 1 funding) of the UK is also an integral part of the context of higher education.

2. **Disciplinary mix:** the mix of subjects within a university also influences its ability to engage with certain agendas. The presence of a Business School, for example, greatly enhances an HEI’s capacity to engage with the business community; the presence of a Medical/Dental School greatly enhances research and student funding opportunities, whilst introducing the necessity to work in partnership with professional bodies such as the NHS; an English Language Centre can increase opportunities for recruiting and retaining overseas students; and access to sporting/cultural facilities influences a university’s capacity to become a cultural or social centre.

3. **Strategic alliances:** the UK higher education sector is extremely competitive. In order to enhance their profile, a number of institutions have established strategic alliances with other HEIs both within the UK and overseas. The remit and purpose of such alliances varies greatly, from broad networks (such as the Russell and
1994 groups) that act as forums for communication and exchange of information about research and as policy pressure groups; to regional alliances seeking to enhance capacity and collaboration within a specific geographic area; to closer alliances between specific institutions, including sharing students, facilities, staff and accreditation of degrees.

4. Commercial alliances: many institutions are also looking to develop commercial alliances with organisations outside the higher education sector through activities such as continuing professional development (CPD), in-house customised provision; student placements, regional/national centres of excellence, etc. The aims of such initiatives may include increasing student numbers, collaborative funding of research (especially in fields such as engineering), and/or enhancing student employability (through placements and commercial experience). They can also offer development opportunities for staff such as secondments and advisory roles.

5. Additional campuses: several universities in our sample are also considering/have established additional campuses in alternative locations both within and beyond the UK. These frequently involve the establishment of overseas campuses to increase presence on an international stage. Whilst such ventures can be successful and become a fundamental part of the university’s business growth strategy they are also relatively high risk both in terms of financing as well as academic quality and strategic direction. Within our own sample at least one university had backed down from a major overseas development due to resistance from academic staff from across the institution. Another university in our sample had set up an additional campus in a nearby town/city to increase its presence within the region and consolidate its position in widening participation and community engagement.

Each of these factors is strongly related but central to the recognition of strategic advantage and institutional purpose. Indeed, one thing that is clear from our research in 12 different institutions is the efforts that each is making to recognise its own particular areas of strength and potential, recognising strategic priorities for development, and endeavouring to communicate this to staff, students and other stakeholders in a meaningful way.

8.3 Development challenges
At a conference on ‘Sustaining Excellence in Higher Education’118 Professor David Eastwood, chief executive of Hefce identified the following five main changes affecting the sector: introduction of variable fees in 2006; independent review of higher education funding reforms in 2009; increasing and widening participation; employer engagement; and ensuring excellence across higher education within national systems of public funding. Ewart Wooldridge, chief executive of the Leadership Foundation, went on to identify five main leadership development challenges for the sector: tackling change strategically; succession planning/talent management/ diversity; ‘professionalisation’; strengthening teams; and handling partnership.

Each of these points relates well to our own research, with particular challenges including:

1. Diversity: enhancing the representation of women, black and ethnic minority groups at senior levels within university management.

2. Succession: identifying, motivating and developing new academic leaders.

3. Career pathway: creating a desirable and realistic career route for academic and other university managers/leaders.

4. Hybrid management: developing closer links between academic and professional managers/leaders.

5. Balancing priorities: balancing competing priorities such as research, teaching, management responsibilities and employer engagement to provide a more realistic and desirable workload.

6. Integration: integrating HR, development, recruitment, assessment and other systems to provide a coherent and consistent approach across the university.

7. Brand: developing and maintaining a coherent, attractive and evolving brand/image for the university in the face of increasingly influential and vocal stakeholder groups both within and outside the organisation (e.g. market rankings, student blogs, mass media, etc.).

Some of these issues will be explored further in Section 9 on leadership development within the sample HEIs.

8.4 Key points
The key points from this section are presented in Figure 8.1.

118 Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, 9th January 2007
FUTURE TRENDS AND CHALLENGES: KEY POINTS

FIGURE 8.1

Changing nature and context of HE

- Changing student demographic
- Political engagement
- Research/teaching orientation
- Vocationalisation & employer engagement

- Customer focus
- Professionalisation of services
- Internationalisation & regionalisation
- Inter-disciplinarity

Strategic differentiation

- Location
- Disciplinary mix
- Strategic alliances
- Commercial alliances
- Additional campuses

Development challenges

- Diversity
- Succession
- Career pathway
- Hybrid management
- Balancing priorities
- Integration
- Brand
9. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This section of the report presents findings and experiences of leadership development within the 12 universities studied. Whilst many of these findings are drawn from the interviews, they are supplemented by input from workshops with members of Staff Development Units (SDUs) and documentary evidence from the sample institutions.

9.1 Overview

Senior leaders within the sample universities clearly see leadership development as an area of high priority and recognise its vital role in the long-term future and success of their organisations. This is also evidenced by the fact that the majority of institutions are either developing or have developed a clear policy framework to guide the institutional strategy and approach to leadership development.

As noted earlier in this report, a gradual shift in attitudes to leadership in higher education is taking place and whilst not every member of the university community necessarily subscribes to leadership from its managerial angle (as opposed to a more traditional ‘collegial’ approach) and leading from a corporate/business perspective, there is evidence of an increasing awareness of the need for leadership and dialogue about how to improve it. This is happening not simply because universities are becoming more managerial, but is also underpinned by greater recognition of the impact of effective leadership and management on improving the way the university and its constituent parts function and better understanding of the nature of and need for change and its potential benefits, however hard it might be. Parallel to and/or as a consequence of this shift there is greater appreciation of the need to enhance leadership development provision and strengthen leadership by providing leaders and managers at various institutional levels with development, guidance and support.

9.2 Current practice

All universities in our sample have some form of in-house leadership development provision. Often this has been introduced as part of Investors in People (IIP) accreditation and in response to the internal and external environment. The Hefce ‘Rewarding and Developing Staff in higher education’ initiative launched in 2001 and Leadership Foundation initiatives such as Fellowships, Small Development Projects, Development Centres and the Change Academy (run in collaboration with the HEA) however have also given great impetus and had a positive impact on leadership development provision and practice in higher education. In the past six years all 12 universities visited for this study have significantly increased and broadened their leadership development activities and have become more innovative in their approach to developing institutional leadership potential.

9.2.1 From generic to bespoke development

There is evidence of a gradual shift from generic centrally-delivered programmes (often classroom-based) to more bespoke, individualised and integrated activities. In this regard, SDUs are changing from a directive and prescriptive approach to leadership development to a more consultative, facilitative, coordinating, advisory and supportive role. In other words, they are moving away from putting everybody through the centrally-run modules (the ‘sheep-dip’ approach) to a more holistic approach where people do not just go through a series of classes but are offered a wide range of provision they can pick and choose from and by doing so shape their individual development in partnership with staff developers.

The shift to a more bespoke and individualised leadership development approach is the consequence of a number of changes in higher education, including:

1. Diversity of experience: As discussed in Section 6, routes to academic leadership and management as well as the professional backgrounds of leaders have become much more diverse than before, with people taking up leadership roles at different stages of their university careers and having different sets of skills and experiences to draw on. Different people therefore need different levels of provision and support. Whilst technical content relating to organisational strategy, budgeting and aspects of HR may continue to be delivered centrally other aspects of development, relating particularly to ‘softer’ skills or changing perceptions of leadership need to take account of previous experience.

2. Diversity of roles: Section 6 also highlighted that the terms and conditions of appointments to formal leadership positions in ‘old’ universities have become increasingly varied, with some formal leaders and manager-academics now being appointed to permanent or executive roles as in ‘new’ universities, whilst others (within the same institution) continuing to be appointed on a rotating basis. In addition, the term in
office of rotating leadership roles may vary within the same university. This means that the pace of development as well as current and future development needs of leaders and manager-academics in comparable roles will inevitably differ.

3. Devolution of authority: The devolution of responsibilities and functions relating to strategy, planning, budgeting, finance and aspects of HR from the top/centre to lower organisational levels, discussed in Section 5, has led to a need to enhance local leadership skills and expertise (e.g. Deans/HoDs, Deputy Deans/HoDs, Heads of Research, Heads of Undergraduate/Postgraduate Studies, Course Leaders, etc.). This devolution, coupled with the centrality of discipline to academic identity and loyalty to their academic units, has increased demand for bespoke and tailor-made development from individual faculties and departments. Indeed, the majority of interviewees held a strong view that the nature of discipline, culture and history of a particular faculty/department, its age and size had an impact on how academics perceive leadership. Bespoke development was reported to address these differences better than generic programmes.

Thus, the increasing diversity of leaders and manager-academics, variety of entry routes to leadership and management, terms and conditions of service, and devolution of organisational responsibilities have made it very difficult, if not impossible, for generic central programmes to meet individual development needs. One can predict with certainty that with the ever-increasing organisational complexity and all it entails, the work of staff developers in providing coherent, institutionally and strategically linked, and yet flexible and relevant, development opportunities will become more challenging and complex. Many examples of good practice can be found in the universities visited for this study and we will highlight these where appropriate.

9.2.2 Types of provision
Although all 12 universities have their own distinctive approach to leadership development in terms of diversity of provision, the organisational level(s) for which it is offered and the forms it takes, four broad types of provision do emerge:

1. Generic programmes with some leadership and management component. These are usually stand-alone, centrally delivered modules/sessions aimed at a broad university population and may include sessions on institutional strategy, legislation and procedures, managing self and others, managing time effectively, leading teams, etc.

2. Bespoke development for specific cross-institutional groups of leaders and managers (e.g. Senior Management Group; Deans of Faculties/Heads of Departments, Heads of Functional Departments, etc.) with a strong leadership and management focus, combining both group and individual learning and development.

3. Bespoke development for specific academic or professional units comprising a series of facilitated events and sessions built around the collective needs and requirements of a particular school, department, faculty or professional service.

4. Individually tailored development for individuals from across the organisation that may involve job-shadowing, secondments, mentoring and coaching. These activities may be offered independently or as part of a formal leadership development programme.

The four types of approach often overlap. For instance, a person or a group going through a bespoke development programme may also be able to tap into modules offered within the generic programmes and/or have a coach or mentor. The topics covered usually include:

a. Acquiring technical knowledge and skills (e.g. planning and budgeting, institutional governance and management structures, university legislation).

b. Exploration of the external and internal contexts in which universities and their constituent parts operate.

c. Examination of the role of participants as leaders and managers and identifying their priorities.

d. Looking at and reflecting on how participants lead other people and enhancing their effectiveness as a leader and manager.

Programme options may include a wide range of group and individual activities such as facilitated sessions, events and discussions, brainstorming, psychometric profiling, self-study, 360° feedback, case-studies, work-based projects, personal reflection, action learning sets, 1:1 coaching and mentoring. Throughout the programme individual and peer support is usually a key element. Delivery of each of these aspects of leadership development is usually done through a mixture of in-house and external provision.
9.2.3 Development for Top Management Teams

Leadership development for the Top Management Team (members of the VC/Principal’s group, which normally includes DVCs/PVCs and their equivalent, Registrar/Secretary, Directors of Finance, HR, and IT) in the universities visited is highly variable. Only a minority of institutions visited offer in-house development programmes for this group of leaders, and when doing so would tend to seek external facilitation from organisations such as the Institute of Directors (IoD), Ashridge Consulting or Roffey Park Institute. One of the main goals of internal programmes at this level is to develop an effective top team (especially if the team is fairly new) and achieve greater levels of collaboration. Within our study one staff developer in a ‘new’ university commented that having a bespoke programme for the most senior institutional leaders sent a positive message across the university that they were committed to leadership development and learning despite busy schedules, workload and time pressures and set an example for leaders at other organisational levels.

In most cases universities have developed, or are in the process of developing bespoke programmes for middle level managers. Although staff developers can offer support through identifying an appropriate coach and mentor and sourcing appropriate development opportunities, in the majority of cases development of this sort is initiated and set up by the individuals themselves through their informal networks as many senior leaders and managers see such personal and professional development interventions as a private matter. One ‘old’ university in our sample, however, has made a large investment in executive-level coaching; developing a bank of external coaches with knowledge and appreciation of the higher education context. The value of coaching in this institution is that it is tailored to the precise needs of individuals and is also directly linked to university priorities and initiatives. It provides opportunities for senior leaders to discuss confidential and sensitive issues. The feedback on this scheme has been reported to have been very positive and the university is currently measuring its impact.

9.2.4 Development for the middle institutional level

In most cases universities have developed, or are in the process of developing, bespoke programmes for middle level managers. Although in most institutions these programmes are optional, there is usually an expectation that newly appointed leaders and managers will sign up for them. The focus of such programmes also varies from technical content to leadership styles and perceptions. However, the leadership component of programmes has clearly become more prominent in all 12 universities.

119 The composition of top management teams varies enormously across the universities visited. In some universities Deans of faculties are equivalent to DVC/PVC roles and members of the top management team and therefore undergo development with other members of the VC/Principal’s group. In others they fall more within the middle level management group and undergo development with other Deans and/or Heads and/or other members of their faculties (see 9.2.4)

120 For further details of the TMP and other leadership programmes from the Leadership Foundation visit www.lfhe.ac.uk
1. Development for Deans/Heads: In the majority of cases, development is provided after Heads take up the role. However a number of universities have recognised the value of development prior to taking on the role. Whenever possible, newly-appointed Heads are offered development prior to assuming their formal responsibilities (in addition to shadowing the outgoing Head) but as the process of appointment can sometimes be quite curtailed (especially in the case of internal rotating posts) there may be insufficient time for this. Despite the fact that most universities have introduced roles such as a Deputy Dean/Head, partly as a mechanism for succession planning, it is not always the case that the person in that role will succeed the outgoing Dean/Head (see below).

Staff developers expressed a desire to have new appointments finalised several months in advance, so that there is sufficient time and opportunity for successors to familiarise themselves with university procedures, go through some formal and informal development, and have a period of handover/transition with the previous incumbent. Indeed, new Deans and Heads suggested that an outgoing Dean/Head would be the most likely person they would turn to for support and guidance. Newly appointed Deans/Heads who have had an opportunity to job shadow or be mentored by the outgoing individual before taking over have found such opportunities to be most beneficial.

Programmes for middle-level university leaders and managers are becoming increasingly participative, interactive and experiential. The value of such programmes is reported to be networking, building up rapport and trust with peers at the same level, having a safe place to go to regularly and discuss issues and challenges they face as Deans/Heads, and having time and space for reflection. Various aspects of the programmes may be organised and delivered either by in-house developers or an external consultant brought in for the purpose. Respondents indicated that external consultants should be of a very high calibre, have a good understanding of the higher education context and issues and be familiar with academic culture. In a number of cases, such as noted for the TMP programme participants have maintained their networks and continued to meet informally after the programme has finished.

A key aspect of development appreciated by middle-level leaders and manager-academics is an understanding of the informal as well as formal channels of communication and influence within institutions. They frequently asked for an understanding of university leadership and management ‘as it is’ rather than as how the university might like it to be. Development of relevant technical skills including managing finances, business planning, IT (such as effective use of email and electronic diaries), and dealing with poor performance, are also seen as essential aspects of becoming an effective leader.

2. Wider management and leadership development: Whilst in some institutions manager-academics and ‘professional’ managers mix in middle-level leadership development programmes, in others there is separate provision for each and whilst most programmes are for cross-institutional groups, there is not much in the way of ‘vertical slice’ groups for development (e.g. Senior Management Team together with middle level managers). This is partly because each organisational level faces somewhat different challenges and certain forms of development may be more appropriate for the senior rather than middle level or vice versa. Transparency and frankness of debate is also found to be easier where participants are of a similar level.

Having said that, several programmes provide opportunities for middle-level leaders and managers to interact with their more senior colleagues, but the latter normally act as facilitators of sessions and rarely as participants alongside the middle-level leaders. The advantage of having vertical slice and cross-institutional groups for development is that it maximises opportunities for cooperation and minimises the potential for a ‘them and us’ culture. In addition to this, one university in our sample has gone beyond organisational boundaries and is running a joint development programme for academic leaders, who are in cross-cutting leadership roles but do not have line-managing or budget responsibilities, with another partner-university. This programme is about challenges they face in their cross-cutting roles and broadly about leading strategically.

3. Bespoke programmes for individual faculties and schools: Such programmes usually mix both academics and functional groups and make leadership development more relevant to the experiences of staff in faculties and departments, because details of such programmes are designed and developed in close partnership between the teams concerned and staff developers. Staff generally feel greater ‘ownership’ of such programmes and gain more from them because topics to be covered are generated within the faculties and departments
themselves. One staff developer in a ‘new’ university, which had introduced a bespoke leadership development programme for individual faculties, reported that holding central programmes did not reach staff and detected that academic and functional staff engaged with leadership more effectively in their own teams than they did with any development that was provided centrally. This does not mean, however, that different faculties and departments cannot come together for development. For instance, in one university in our sample, several faculties came together for some of the developmental events and this provided an opportunity for participants to meet and network with their colleagues from other faculties. The faculties also came together for the final joint evaluation event.

4. Developing soft skills: In terms of what middle-level leaders and managers need most in their development, many issues the interviewees kept referring back to were issues around HR where the ‘soft’ skills were perceived to be most necessary: leading teams effectively, leading and managing change, managing difficult issues around workload, teaching and research balance, dealing with difficult colleagues, dealing with conflict situations, how to manage academic performance in the absence of any explicit performance criteria. For many interviewees, leadership development was not so much about developing ‘hard’ skills, but about developing softer skills or changing self perception. The universities in our sample have used various approaches to developing ‘soft’ skills in their leaders and managers. One university, for instance, created Leadership Development Groups as part of the middle-level leadership development programme for academic leaders to explore leadership issues. Another university invited professional actors to act out various scenarios for discussion and reflection by participants. A number of others have used action learning sets to explore different leadership and management styles. Many interviewees commented that the more learning and development moved away from being prescriptive and focused on technical content the more enjoyable and engaging it became, although others, particularly from the ‘hard sciences’ such as engineering and physics, showed a preference for technical content.

5. Mentoring and coaching: mentoring is perceived to be one of the most effective interventions for developing ‘softer’ skills. Although formal mentoring schemes exist in most institutions, in practice the relationships perceived to be most useful tend to be those set up by mentors and mentees themselves. Mentoring was seen as a very valuable source of guidance and support, particularly for talking through challenges, discussing sensitive issues and gaining advice from a more experienced colleague. It was also reported to be useful not only for mentees, but also for mentors as they can learn from the relationship and use it to develop their own coaching and facilitation skills.

Mentoring is also seen as a key process in helping leaders reflect on their practice. One staff developer noted that mentoring in his university tended to work more successfully when it was against a specific requirement rather than where it was just being freely offered to people. Another university, which retains the salary increase for being a Head of Department after the end of the term of office, expects an outgoing Head to act as a mentor for a new Head. However, it could present difficulties as in old universities the past Heads and Deans are in most cases unavailable because of sabbaticals they are entitled to after their headship. Therefore, identifying and appointing a new Head or Dean well in advance becomes important.

Although coaching is not widely available at the middle management level, a number of universities in our sample had recently run pilot schemes for this group. Coaching tends to be a shorter-term relationship than mentoring and may prove most valuable for specific staff groups, especially those with other life commitments (e.g. mothers and carers) and at particular pivotal points in their career (e.g. prior to and immediately after taking on the role, or during a time of particular change or turbulence such as organisational restructuring). One female HoD, for instance, mentioned that coaching before taking on the role had been particularly helpful in persuading her to apply for the post and deciding to pursue this career option.

Mentoring and coaching are mostly driven by individuals being proactive in taking this opportunity or people setting up their own informal mentoring or coaching through their own networks. Many programme participants, however, want to see more formalised mentoring and coaching schemes so that each person on a programme can have access to a mentor or coach if they want. Although SDUs in all universities offer such support they may need to be more explicit about this.

6. External leadership roles: One domain of leadership development opportunity that clearly operates within
universities is participation in leadership outside/beyond the institution. Thus, for example, academics may chair committees for Research Councils or professional associations, clinical staff may well have an active role in the running of the NHS Trust, and academics may be involved in organising national and international conferences, editorial boards for academic journals, be engaged in leading community and/or regional initiatives, etc. These are all reported to be excellent arenas in which staff (both from academic and functional groups) can gain additional and valuable experience, as well as obtaining useful strategic insights for the wider institution. These can also be part of selection and promotion criteria discussed in Section 6. Many interviewees reported that having an external leadership experience has been a valuable learning and development opportunity in itself and has helped in their internal leadership roles.

7. Development as a driver for diversity: it should be noted that the issue of diversity in terms of gender imbalance and low representation of black and ethnic minority groups in formal leadership positions within universities has been a recurring theme throughout the data collection stage. To address these issues two universities in our sample introduced mentoring schemes as a deliberate attempt to take positive action and help underrepresented groups who do not typically enter leadership roles. One ‘new’ university with a strong commitment to equality and diversity, for instance, introduced a wider management mentoring programme for female and black and ethnic minority managers. All mentors were drawn from outside the institution, from either public or private sectors or from other HEIs. One ‘old’ university is planning to introduce a mentoring scheme in which women professors mentor their younger or more junior female colleagues, particularly in those departments, which have few, if any, women in senior leadership/management roles. The idea behind these initiatives is to give under represented groups the necessary skills and confidence and, perhaps, help them change their perception and see themselves as leaders in the future.

8. Impact of development: in terms of individual and organisational performance, it is difficult to detect what type of provision is most effective. When asked about the impact of leadership development on individual and organisational performance, the majority of interviewees at different institutional levels saw its impact in terms of guidance and support for staff, creating a positive work environment where research and teaching can flourish and where people feel happy about working rather than performance management per se or other hard measures or indicators. Effectiveness of programmes depends very much on the individual and the aim of the SDUs is to offer different and diverse models of development which may be appropriate and relevant to different people.

It is evident from our data that leadership and management in our sample institutions is becoming more ‘professionalised’ with more people studying for a general MBA or MBA in higher education and going through various internal and external leadership and management development programmes. Despite this, the majority suggested that they had mainly developed their leadership skills informally and on the job over a number of years and in more junior roles through taking on leadership and management responsibilities, learning from and observing other leaders and managers, networking with peers and taking external leadership responsibilities. Nevertheless, all interviewees emphasised the importance of formal development and the overwhelming view seems to be that a tailored approach to leadership development works much better than generic programmes. It is also important to discuss and review the leadership development provision regularly to maintain freshness and vitality around the programmes and identify emerging priorities for leadership development.

9.3 Emerging Priorities
The 12 universities in our sample are very different and operate in different contexts. It should be emphasised that understanding the context and challenges it presents to institutions and their leaders is very important. However, their emerging priorities in terms of leadership development are somewhat similar but take account of specific institutional and wider contexts.

9.3.1 Sustainability of provision
A shift to an individualised, bespoke and tailor-made provision puts more pressure on resources, both financial and human. Staff developers are aware that after the Hefce Rewarding and Developing Staff initiative comes to an end it would be very difficult to keep investment in leadership development at a comparable level. Another issue relates to HR supporting leadership development as currently a very small team in each institution provides professional and administrative support to this activity. It is becoming increasingly difficult and challenging for a small team to offer and support the variety and range of leadership development initiatives now
4.2 Integration with HRM

Since leadership development is becoming bespoke and individualised, staff developers emphasised the pressing need to be more systematic about what individuals' development needs are. In this regard, the annual PDR process was considered to be a useful tool, but one which has not been fully utilised when it comes to leadership development. Nearly all institutions have now introduced a PDR process for all staff categories but they vary in the extent to which this is formalised, systematic, compulsory and/or linked to leadership development and reward. In the majority of universities, appraisal and performance review existed only formally and only in the minority of cases has it been happening systematically for many years. In one ‘new’ university compulsory appraisal was introduced in 1990 and was said to have been very beneficial; in this case, the new PDR process was just seen as a formalisation of what the university had been doing for years. In other universities, appraisal or performance review was not compulsory and/or was resisted by staff in academic departments. There now seems to be recognition, however, that the PDR process is a necessary and integral part of university management and is seen as a priority, particularly in light of the recent national pay review and Framework Agreement.

Despite variations in institutional approaches to the PDR process, the majority cover academic performance in three main areas: research, teaching, and administrative/managerial (sometimes classified as leadership). The universities visited are trying to make the PDR process more ‘forward-looking’ than the old appraisal system (which was characterised by some as negative and deficit-orientated), linking it to future individual and organisational needs. However, it was emphasised that, to be successful, this process needs to be introduced and monitored in a consistent and systematic manner across the whole university. Currently, in a number of organisations, there is no commonly accepted institutional approach to PDR and wide variations across faculties and departments in the extent to which the process is regarded and implemented.

From the perspective of academic staff, the emerging priority is to make the PDR an effective mechanism through which they can gain a better understanding of where they need to go in their contribution and to what extent their activities are broadly in line with the direction and strategy of department, faculty and institution. Staff developers in turn see the need to develop a process of effectively feeding development needs, identified through the PDR process, to the centre, so that the data from this process can be collated and used to analyse better current and future development needs on a university-wide basis. In the context of the shift from central generic programmes to individualised and bespoke development, the emerging themes from the PDR data can be used to align individual development needs with institutional priorities and link individual development with institutional strategy and change.

9.3 Succession planning

The annual PDR process can also be used as a mechanism for succession planning. Indeed, succession planning is one of the main priorities that interviewees highlighted. The practice in all universities thus far has been the introduction of semi-formal roles such as Deputy Dean/Head partly in response to increasing organisational complexity but also as a form of succession planning to enable a wider group of people to engage in leadership and management activity before entering a more senior leadership position. This does not, however, mean that people in such semi-formal roles automatically become Deans or Heads, especially in the current context in which formal leadership posts are increasingly advertised externally, but having had the opportunity to acquire the sort of skills, experience and capability to apply for more senior roles and having provided additional support for the existing Dean or Head they are likely to be the most obvious internal candidates. The issue of succession planning has also become important owing to a large number of retiring leaders at the senior level.

Another current approach to succession planning is to offer potential leaders opportunities to gain the necessary experience for more senior roles. Such experience may include chairing committees, managing research grants, representing the university on working groups, and directing research and teaching programmes. Indeed, there is no shortage of such opportunities at the faculty/school level but these are not always allocated in the most strategic manner (e.g. the ‘usual suspects’ rather than a development opportunity). In most instances, however, leaders at all levels remain on the look-out for aspiring and promising young academics and senior lecturers that demonstrate some ability
to lead and manage and will give them leadership and management challenges in the early stages of their career both as a means for their development and ‘testing them out’. Such succession planning, however, is invariably rather ad hoc and informal.

Attempts are now being made to formalise succession planning through identifying and developing future leaders. Rather than waiting for leadership talent to emerge of its own accord, as has largely been the case in the past, a small number of universities in our sample have started to address leadership capability gaps by having a pro-active approach to spotting and nurturing a pool of internal leadership talent so that the university is better prepared when leadership vacancies arise. To this end they have developed organisational support through design and provision of specific schemes for those with interest in and potential for leadership. All universities in our sample which had not yet introduced a formal mechanism for succession planning were considering and/or implementing similar initiatives for aspiring/potential leaders.

In terms of operationalisation of succession planning in one ‘old’ university it comprises both corporate and local elements and is intended to represent a partnership approach between SDU, Schools/Functional areas and the individuals concerned. Each member of the staff nominated and selected for developing future leaders programme has an in-depth discussion regarding their experience, skills, knowledge, abilities, fears, hopes and aspirations in relation to leadership. In the process of this discussion, areas for attention, support and development and an individual development plan are identified. The plan is multi-dimensional and demands a multifaceted approach to its implementation, including corporate provision via staff development, Department/ Functional area based interventions, external provision within the sector, professional/discipline based initiatives and other opportunities. All activities undertaken are monitored and evaluated.

Another ‘old’ university has established Development Centres with the support of the Leadership Foundation for spotting and nurturing potential and aspiring leaders, where existing senior leaders and managers act as observers. There was a discussion at the university about what it needed of its leaders and whether the sets of skills it had fitted that framework. This was an interesting and challenging initiative for the staff developers and senior managers as they did not initially think that the scheme, which involves measuring people against a framework and constantly giving them feedback, would fit the university culture and although it is still early days for evaluating the impact of the scheme (two cohorts with a total of 12 participants have been on the programme), the fact that 24 applications were received for six places in the 3rd cohort confirms our earlier finding that there is a new breed of academics in ‘old’ universities, who are interested in formal leadership and may see it as a desirable career route.

Developing future leaders programmes thus give people the opportunity to explore and experience the role and its demands and whilst valuable for preparing leaders for formal roles, as often as not they also act as a filter for people who realise that this is no longer a role they desire. Thus, the programme can enable the participants to take a more informed decision about taking up a formal leadership role. As one interviewee put it “[investing in someone’s development] is cheaper than appointing the wrong Head of School for five years”. The programme participants are usually nominated by their line managers and then selected by a panel. What is not always evident, however, is the criteria and methods used to judge, select or deselect people with leadership potential and what people’s motivations are for choosing to be involved in formal university leadership.

After having created a ‘pool’ of internal leadership talent, another priority and challenge for universities relates to their career development. Participants who have completed the future leadership programme would want to know what is next in terms of their career, how the university is going to recoup the investment it made in them in terms of time and resources, various activities, support and guidance and how it is going to utilise their skills and knowledge now and in the future. This has the potential to become quite a sensitive issue when looked at from an equal opportunities perspective, especially as the opportunities for formal leadership are limited and if there is anticipation of a guarantee of promotion when someone leaves, it closes opportunities for other people to compete for the role.

This may be a reason behind some universities being less explicit about their approach to developing future leaders and how they advertise this. One university introduced a development programme for senior lecturers, primarily to help them with the job, but also with an underlying intention of building up a body of people who have more development in the skills and knowledge that would be needed, for

121 For details of the Leadership Foundation work on succession management see
www.lfhe.ac.uk/supportteam/sm
instance, to be a Head of Department. Other universities have introduced specific development activities for Principal Investigators and/or professional managers, working alongside academic Deans/Heads, but also implicitly see it as an opportunity to develop future leaders.

The actual text of the Leadership Competency Framework developed by one of the sample universities states: ‘whilst the future leadership scheme can be set firmly within a succession planning context, a fundamental principle of the scheme is the acknowledgement that those people selected may follow a development path which ultimately takes them away from the faculty/department/functional area/ institution and/or the disciplines/ professions they currently work in’. Therefore, succession planning should not be seen as simply an internal function of growing leaders for a particular institution but a sector-wide concern of significance to all UK HEIs. This is precisely what the Leadership Foundation is currently doing by joining up internal and external succession planning schemes and other leadership development initiatives in a coherent way whereby everyone can feel that there is something they can tap into that meets their needs in relation to leadership roles.

9.3.4 Partnerships and collaborations
In terms of inter-institutional collaboration, only three universities in our sample run leadership development programmes in collaboration with other HEIs, but many identified partnerships and collaborations as an emerging priority. Having more inter-institutional collaboration will provide greater opportunities for participants to meet, network with and learn from colleagues from other HEIs. One university in our sample also entered into partnership with an external provider to train a team of in-house coaches.

Collaborations with ‘home’ faculties/schools/ departments in internal delivery of programmes are also currently limited. Only a handful of universities in our sample use their ‘home’ faculties/departments (e.g. Business School) to develop and deliver internal leadership development. Whilst institutional circumstances differ, the staff developers expressed their intention of finding better ways of utilising internal expertise.

9.3.5 Additional areas of consideration
Other emerging leadership development priorities/ considerations are outlined below.

• Continuing development: As practices of appointment to formal leadership roles in ‘old’ universities are gradually changing, universities are paying increasing attention to continuing and ongoing development provision for formal leaders and manager-academics, who are on permanent and long-term posts. Development is no longer simply confined to their induction period immediately prior or after taking up the role.

• Younger and early-career academics: Alongside research and teaching, leadership and management is increasingly taken into consideration for promotion of all academic staff. To improve promotion opportunities early-career academics tend to see their job in a more rounded way than their more established colleagues. They want to know what needs to be done in terms of development and learning in all three domains and what will increase their career opportunities. This will require line-managers and staff developers to meet their individual needs in a timely fashion as they emerge. It may also ensure that leadership and management is embraced and taken on board early on in one’s academic career.

• Programme accreditation: Explicit use of leadership and management experience as part of selection and promotion criteria as well as a requirement for evidence of leadership and management skills for research grants, may encourage people to seek accredited leadership development. With this in mind a number of universities in our sample had their in-house programmes endorsed by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) so that participants can choose to have an ILM certificate if they so wish. Judging from the reaction of the staff-developers from other institutions it is likely that they will pursue a similar approach.

• Career pathways: Another issue that seldom seems to be formally addressed but is, nevertheless, seen as an important factor in individual motivation to take on a leadership/management role is the planned exit from leadership roles. This is particularly pertinent in ‘old’ universities where there is an expectation that a moderate number of formal leaders will return to traditional academic roles afterwards. Outgoing Deans and Heads may well find the transition back to being a ‘pure’ academic painful and challenging and in a number of universities this is being addressed by offering ongoing support, financial incentives and the opportunity to mentor and offer guidance to new Deans and Heads.

• Performance management: It is not clear whether leadership development assists with performance, but the view appears to be that performance management will impact on leadership and management and if people start managing performance and seeing it as an important
aspect that will create a difference to how they see their personal and professional development. As for formal evaluation mechanisms, they are currently limited in scope and scale in all sample universities and mainly include end of programme questionnaires, informal discussions and evaluation events. A number of universities, however, are in the process of developing more robust evaluation approaches to assess the impact of leadership development on an individual and organisational scale.

### 9.4 Key points

The main findings presented in this section are summarised in Figure 9.1. This figure shows the changes occurring in leadership development practices and some of the emerging priorities in relation to leadership development in HEIs. As is clear from the discussion above, not every aspect of change is happening in every institution visited for this study, but it provides an overall picture across the sample universities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FROM</th>
<th>TO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central generic programmes with some leadership and management components</td>
<td>Core modules + Bespoke, individualised and tailor-made development with a strong leadership and management focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly face-to-face, class based interaction</td>
<td>Combination of face-to-face and self-directed and ‘blended’ learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptive and content-heavy provision; emphasis on ‘hard’ skills</td>
<td>Participative, interactive, experiential and reflective programmes; more emphasis on ‘soft’ skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff developers as development providers and deliverers</td>
<td>Staff developers as consultants, supporters, advisers and facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal and ad-hoc coaching and mentoring arrangements</td>
<td>Increasing use of formal coaching and mentoring across the organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of diversity (gender, ethnicity, age, etc.) in formal leadership roles</td>
<td>Leadership development as a vehicle to drive diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraisal (often negatively received)</td>
<td>Linking development with PDR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad hoc and informal succession planning</td>
<td>Formal and systematic succession planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing existing leaders</td>
<td>Identifying and developing future leadership talent &amp; managing careers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing induction prior to or immediately after taking up the role</td>
<td>Continuing &amp; ongoing leadership development / career management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited or no support after the end of the term</td>
<td>Planned exit from rotating leadership roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No formal evaluation of the impact of leadership development</td>
<td>Developing more robust mechanisms for evaluation as a priority</td>
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10. DISCUSSION

In this section of the report we review the main findings from the study and what they tell us about the manner in which leadership is conceived and enacted in UK higher education.

10.1 The distribution of leadership in higher education

Overall, the findings indicate a tendency within UK universities to widely distribute leadership. Indeed, there is much to imply that without sharing of responsibilities, accountabilities and resources, the complex, varied and sometimes competing objectives of HEIs would be unachievable. Despite this, however, all institutions in our sample reported difficulties in achieving an appropriate balance between top-down, bottom-up and lateral processes of communication and influence. In effect, there remains a dynamic tension between the need for collegiality and managerialism, individual autonomy and collective engagement, leadership of the discipline and the institution, academic versus administrative authority, informality and formality, inclusivity and professionalisation, etc.

Each institution has developed its own particular structures, systems and processes to respond to these challenges – some incrementally over time and others through adaptive or transformational change. What is evident, however, is that the nature of these structures and how they operate are largely dependent on the holders of formal leadership positions. Thus, for example, the manner in which the VC/Principal structures the Senior Management Team will be, at least in part, influenced by his/her personal qualities and preferences and Deans/Heads will develop management structures according to how they see the role, the resources at their disposal, the people they are working with and the policy context in which they operate.

In endeavouring to interpret the findings on how leadership is shared, recognised and experienced within higher education we noticed the dynamic inter-play between five main groups of factors (individual, social, structural, contextual and developmental) as indicated in Figure 10.1.
10.1.1 Structural/organisational

This dimension refers to the organisational environment in which leadership occurs. It includes organisational systems, processes and structures, particularly those relating to the allocation and management of budgets and resources, HRM (including PDR, career progression and development), formal and informal communication channels (vertical and horizontal) and forums for consultation and decision making. Our research has demonstrated, for example, the manner in which devolution of budgetary control, along with transparency in the allocation of finances, is fundamental in shaping leadership at the school/departmental level. Formal line management and budgetary authority offer additional sources of power and authority to the post holder that may help them influence their colleagues in different ways – e.g. through the use of reward or coercion.

The consequences of devolution, however, are likely to be both beneficial and problematic for the institution as a whole. Thus, whilst devolution of financial and managerial control may encourage schools and departments to become more commercially orientated, it may also lead to fragmentation of the organisation and the development of managerial ‘silos’ that render cross-organisational initiatives such as branding, sharing resources and interdisciplinary teaching and research particularly challenging. Furthermore, devolving formal power to leaders at lower levels within the organisation may well disempower managers/leaders at more senior levels. Thus, without direct control over resources, non-budget managing senior roles are left to rely on personal influence alone and may be somewhat powerless in the face of opposition without recourse to colleagues with such powers.

It thus becomes possible to distinguish at least two types of leader within universities – those with formal hierarchical power (top-down influence) and those relying predominantly on interpersonal influence (horizontal influence). A third type may well be those with less formalised roles within the university hierarchy but who, nevertheless, exert a great deal of influence by virtue of their control of sought after resources such as research funding, academic reputation, political/social influence beyond the organisation, and/or a charismatic presence (bottom-up influence). Figure 5.2 in Section 5 represents this diagrammatically and indicates how, as people progress through an academic management pathway, they may well be required to alternate between different types of role and forms of influence. This transition poses major developmental challenges, implying that the same style and mode of leadership is not appropriate at all levels within the institution.

In their discussion of ‘distributed leadership’ Spillane et al argue that ‘situation or context does not simply affect what [school] leaders do as some sort of independent or interdependent variable(s); it is constitutive of leadership practice’. That is to say, the structure (a fundamental element of the situation or context) is as integral to the practice of leadership as are leaders and/or followers. This argument is supported by our findings and makes an important contribution to our understanding of leadership in organisations. Thus, when attempting to identify, develop and/or evaluate leadership within higher education it is essential to consider the structural dimensions of organisational functioning as well as the human aspects. Aspects of the physical layout, technological infrastructure, formal systems and procedures, etc. all influence the manner in which leadership is enacted and perceived.

This is a significant progression from more individualistic concepts of leadership (including trait, behavioural, situational and transformational models) but it should still be noted that structure is dynamic and changing, not static and fixed. Whilst organisational structures may affect what leaders, followers and other organisational actors are able to do they are also shaped and changed by (and sometimes for) these people. Thus, for example, we have observed ‘pseudo-structures’, introduced following organisational restructuring in order to offer senior posts to displaced academic or professional managers. We have noted how new roles, such as PVC for Planning and Resources and hybrid management-academic roles such as Business Development Director, are created for promising individuals that the organisation wishes to retain and promote but who do not fit easily within pre-existing roles. We have also observed the evolution of structures that restrict opportunities for engagement between different groups (e.g. HoSs or Dean and the VCEG) based on previous personality clashes or leadership failures. Whilst these may be functional for a time, they will most likely deteriorate or become dysfunctional as post holders and contextual factors change, leading to some of the consequences identified in Section 7.5.

10.1.2 Individual

This dimension refers to individual leaders – their personal qualities, experience and preferences. Our research revealed a wide variation in personal styles, motivations and approaches within and between universities, ranging from highly individualistic (and sometimes idiosyncratic) through to team and collective approaches to leadership. University leaders were generally represented as rather colourful characters, each with his or her own personal strengths and weaknesses. Even where leadership was carried out within and across

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123 These are ‘ideal types’ (Weber, M. (1949)) such that in practice it is unlikely that individuals will fall clearly into any single category
groups, someone had invariably been identified to lead or take the initiative on that activity (to chair a committee, coordinate a working group, direct a course, act as principal investigator, etc.). Despite variations between individuals there was general consensus on the need for academic and professional credibility, consultation and openness, although the manner in which these translated into leadership behaviour varied considerably. Thus, whilst some depended on charisma or force of character, others constructed forums or teams for consultative and collective decision-making.

Despite overwhelming support for a collective leadership approach in higher education, a striking finding from our research concerned the expressed need for inspirational or visionary individuals, particularly in times of change or transition (or to bring about these). At first this might seem counter to the principles of distributed or dispersed leadership, yet more often than not complaints were about a lack of clarity, direction or decisiveness rather than the contrary. The VC/Principal, in particular, was looked to as setting the overall direction for the organisation, consulting with others but taking the final decision on strategy him/herself; with a similar perspective often being afforded to Deans and Heads. To this extent it could be argued that the designated leader needs to be given the authority to act on behalf of the group, in effect to be seen to be ‘doing it for us’ or acting as a ‘socialised charismatic leader’. It may be that if an inspirational leader (not necessarily in a formal management role) embodies shared values they can act as a focal point for collective endeavour and facilitate the engagement of others in the leadership process.

Another important aspect relating to personal style regards the use of informal rather than formal channels of communication and influence. Despite the complex organisational structures present within universities, many leaders appear to learn how to navigate and utilise the informal paths and networks, sometimes totally bypassing or undermining the formal structures. One example of this is where discussions are held informally prior to committee meetings and a decision is effectively reached prior to the formal discussion. Likewise, HoSs or HoDs may choose to bypass Deans or PVCs and go straight to the VC, DVC or Registrar (only occasionally being redirected to the official route), or they might develop their own informal networks and lobby groups to increase their influence.

Finally, as mentioned in the previous section, high profile individuals with no formal managerial position (such as professors, ‘research stars’ or previous holders of rotating posts) may well have a disproportionately large influence within the organisation. A substantial part of the narrative fabric of organisational life within universities (like many other organisations) relates to stories of the successes and/or failures of key individuals – frequently referring to events that occurred many years ago and which the vast majority of staff would no longer remember.

In a review of the literature on effective leadership in higher education, Alan Bryman identified 13 behaviours associated with effective leadership (see below). Despite not being systematically coded in our own study, these factors fit well with our interpretation of findings. Although we are not in a position to argue a causal relationship between performance and effectiveness, it is likely that where these aspects are absent, leadership could be experienced as dysfunctional and meet with resistance.

### Aspects of Effective Leader Behaviour in higher education

1. Clear sense of direction/strategic vision
2. Preparing department arrangements to facilitate the direction set
3. Being considerate
4. Treating academic staff fairly and with integrity
5. Being trustworthy and having personal integrity
6. Allowing the opportunity to participate in key decisions/encouraging open communication
7. Communicating well about the direction the department is going
8. Acting as a role model and having credibility
9. Creating a positive and collegial work atmosphere in the department
10. Advancing the department’s cause with respect to constituencies internal and external to the university and being proactive in doing so
11. Providing feedback on performance
12. Providing resources for and adjusting workloads to stimulate scholarship and research
13. Making academic appointments that enhance department’s reputation
10.1.3 Social

This dimension concerns the social and relational aspects of organisational life. It incorporates the informal networks, partnerships and alliances; culture or ‘feel’ of the place; and any shared sense of purpose and identity.

Within our own study, the concept of identity seemed integrally linked to motivations and experiences of leadership that are not well captured in behavioural or procedural accounts. Identity refers to the multiple, shifting and sometimes conflicting senses of self experienced by university managers/leaders. Thus, for example, academic leaders (even up to the most senior level) retain the identity of ‘academic’ alongside their managerial role and may endeavour to remain active in research and teaching within their own academic discipline. This dual role has the potential to generate difficult tensions such as conflicting allegiances between the institution, the discipline and even the research group; and having line management and budgetary authority whilst also needing to be seen as an academic colleague and impartial when weighing up decisions (particularly in the case of HoDs/HoSs in rotational posts). A considerable amount of the fieldwork for this study was conducted at the time of the AUT industrial action in Summer 2006, where Heads of Schools and Departments were being encouraged by senior management to ensure that exam papers were issued, sat and assessed, whilst they themselves were members of the union and many of their immediate academic colleagues were taking action short of a strike. For many, this was the first time they had really had their identity as an ‘academic’ or ‘manager’ tested and, in nearly all cases, there was a realisation that their fundamental allegiance was now to the institution rather than their academic peers.

A further identity tension that often revealed itself related to research activity. Whilst all academic leaders within research-intensive universities viewed themselves as researchers at the start of their management career, over a period of time the focus had shifted to being a facilitator of the research of others. Furthermore, despite an initial resistance to taking on a leadership role, many interviewees found that they enjoyed the opportunity for influence that it gave them and chose to remain in academic management rather than returning to pure academia (thus shifting from ‘reluctant manager’ to ‘career manager’ in the terms of Deem129). This introduces a longer-term biographical element to the findings whereby, over the period of one’s career, the research contribution can transform from active production to facilitation and support. This dimension of research contribution would seem to be a fundamental part of the transition from ‘academic’ to ‘leader’ yet continues to receive little recognition or reward within the current performance output climate, especially the 2008 RAE. Furthermore, it could be central to reframing academic-management positions in a way that does not undermine the individual’s academic profile – perhaps one of the main deterrents for many academics taking on such roles.

Within our study there were also considerable variations in the extent to which academic leaders shared a sense of common ‘social identity’ with other managers (both academic and administrative) within and beyond the institution. In a number of cases, informal networking opportunities had arisen for people in similar or connected roles to share experiences and ideas and these seemed to be important in the construction of a sense of belonging to the management cadre. Haslam130 argues that a shared social identity is essential for leadership to occur, but if a HoS/HoD is aligned with their discipline rather than their institution, it is unlikely that he/she will either want to or be able to rally support in pursuit of broader organisational objectives. The same is true of academic and administrative functions – if they are perceived as fundamentally separate and opposed (as ‘in’ and ‘out’ groups) then there is unlikely to be much cooperation or consistency between these categories of staff.

10.1.4 Contextual

The fourth dimension of leadership captured within the model in Figure 10.1 is ‘contextual’, reflecting the way in which higher education leadership is becoming increasingly politicised and subject to external pressures. Such trends are noted throughout the report but most specifically within Section 8 where we highlight a number of shifts occurring across the sector, and the manner in which universities are responding.

At the heart of these changes is an increasing trend towards greater commercial and market focus that is putting pressure on traditional bureaucratic and/or collegial forms of organisation. Similar trends have been noted in the further education sector, where it has been remarked that there is a broad shift from “community to commercialism”131.

In this climate, effective leadership and management, both within and beyond the institution, are increasingly seen as an organisational necessity. Senior university leaders are increasingly engaged in high-level policy debates at local,

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129 Deem, R. (2001)
national and international level and leaders at lower levels within the organisation are given greater executive powers. Universities are now regarded as central to the government’s drive towards the ‘knowledge economy’\(^\text{132}\).

Within this context, however, there is a danger that economic performance becomes the overriding priority at the expense of the wider social contribution of higher education. Thus, as Olssen and Peters argue, the neo-liberal reform of higher education and increasing marketisation leads to a situation whereby:

“Education is represented as an input–output system which can be reduced to an economic production function… In addition, new public management in applying quasi market or private sector microtechniques to the management of public sector organisations has replaced the ‘public service ethic’ whereby organisations were governed according to norms and values derived from assumptions about the ‘common good’ or ‘public interest’ with a new set of contractualist norms and rules.”\(^\text{133}\)

Whilst performance indicators for the sector cover a range of factors including access to higher education, non-completion rates for students, outcomes and efficiencies for learning and teaching, employment of graduates and research outputs\(^\text{134}\), what staff regard as their primary aims and motivations for working within the sector are perhaps more closely associated with social and public value than economic goals.

10.1.5 Developmental
The final dimension in Figure 10.1 refers to the ongoing and changing developmental needs of individuals, groups and organisations. Specifically, within this context, there is an overlap between individual, team and organisational development and in order to be effective, interventions must endeavour to avoid returning changed individuals to an unchanged system or vice-versa. Thus ‘leadership development’ is necessarily broader than the development of people in leadership positions and organisational development must address the human as well as non-human aspects of the system.

This dimension also draws attention to the temporal aspects of leadership in organisations – acknowledging that there is a time and a place for particular approaches and that personal engagement with leadership should be regarded within the wider biographic narrative of the individual (both within and outside of work). Thus, for example, there are times in a person’s life when taking on additional leadership responsibilities would be unadvisable and other times when it should be encouraged. Leadership is not a destination for individuals and organisations - it is an ongoing journey that requires adaptation, transformation and change.

10.2 Distributed leadership in higher education: rhetoric and reality
This research set out to explore the manner in which leadership is perceived, enacted and developed in UK higher education. Specifically, our aim was to investigate the extent to which leadership in HEIs can be considered to be ‘distributed’ and, if so, what is distributed, what are the mechanisms by which it is distributed, and what are the benefits for practice, analysis and/or policy-making? This report will now reflect on the utility of the concept in the light of what has already been discussed.

Firstly, as a description of leadership practice the concept of distributed leadership appears to be of limited value, being too broad and ambiguous to adequately capture the subtleties and complexities of leadership in higher education. Whilst it is certainly helpful in drawing attention to bottom-up and horizontal forms of influence as well as emergent and collective forms of engagement, it only gives a partial representation of organisational leadership processes. Thus, at the very least, we must distinguish between formal endeavours to distribute leadership through delegation and devolution and the more informal dispersal of leadership, responsibility and accountability based on individual and group interests, abilities and motivations. Within much of the literature\(^\text{135}\) the notion of ‘distributed leadership’ is presented in opposition to hierarchical leadership, yet in fact our data point to a symbiotic relationship between the two – both in the enactment of leadership and in the expressed preference of higher education staff. Collinson and Collinson\(^\text{136}\) refer to such an approach as ‘blended leadership’ and challenge the normative push towards purer forms of distributed leadership. Left unchecked such a distinction may become as misleading and false a dichotomy as that between ‘leadership’ and ‘management’\(^\text{137}\).

As an analytical framework for looking at leadership practice, the concept of distributed leadership is more promising. As noted above, it draws attention to influence and agency beyond that within the formal hierarchical structure. Its

\(^{132}\) Leitch, S. (2006)
\(^{134}\) Hefce (1999)
\(^{135}\) e.g. Gronn, P.(2002); Harris, A. (2003); Woods, P.A. et al (2004)
fundamental value in this respect, however, is to draw attention to the wider environment of leadership – the systems, processes and structures (both formal and informal) in which leadership practice occurs. Thus, for example, the manner in which budgets and resources are allocated, the physical layout of buildings, formal and informal channels for communication and participation, and performance appraisal, recognition and reward processes, are all fundamental elements of leadership practice. To this extent we need to direct attention to the non-human as well as the human aspects of organisational life. Structure and environment is not something static and unchanging but highly dynamic and integrally linked to the human elements of the system. Thus, organisational structures both influence, and are influenced by, the manner in which varying organisational actors interact. Furthermore, there is a significant temporal dimension to this. Our work supports the notion of leadership as a long-term and contextually embedded process and encourages consideration of the changing motivations and actions of individuals over the course of their lifetime. Representations of leadership typically focus on outputs whilst neglecting the precursors and longer term consequences of leadership behaviour.

As a normative prescription of leadership practice in higher education the notion of ‘distributed leadership’ should be treated with caution. Given the changing nature of the sector, whereby collegial and bureaucratic structures are giving way to corporate and enterprise cultures, distributed leadership appears to offer a powerful normative framework that embodies both concepts of collegiality and managerialism that may be appealing to academic leaders. Thus, distributed leadership may be seen as a bridge between top-down and bottom-up decision making processes that is more flexible and responsive than the traditional committee structure, but which evades the professionalisation of management roles that has crept into other sectors such as the NHS. Despite this, however, there is a serious danger that distributed leadership may lead to a one sided perspective that could ultimately hamper organisational effectiveness. As indicated earlier, the oppositional tone of much of the literature paints distributed leadership as a successor, rather than complement, to traditional hierarchical leadership which may mask the underlying nature of power and influence within organisations. This also provides less, rather than more, clarity on the differences and similarities between roles across the organisation (e.g. cross-cutting roles such as PVC versus hierarchical roles such as VC or HoS) and on how the holders of such roles can best be supported and developed. As Pearce argues:

“The issue is not vertical leadership or shared leadership. Rather the issues are: (1) When is leadership most appropriately shared? (2) How does one develop shared leadership? And (3) how does one utilise both vertical and shared leadership to leverage the capabilities of knowledge workers? It is only by addressing these issues head on that organisations will move toward a more appropriate model of leadership in the age of knowledge work.”

Most of all, however, our research leads us to conclude that the notion of ‘distributed leadership’ is most powerful as a rhetorical device. In this respect, the notion of distributed leadership could be used to help construct social identities that bring together notions such as ‘academic’ and ‘manager’ so that, for example, management is seen as an integral element of being a good academic or ‘management’ is reframed as ‘leadership’, rendering it more appealing to those resistant to managerial connotations. However, distributed leadership may also be used by those in positions of real power to disguise power differentials – offering the illusion of consultation and participation whilst obscuring the mechanisms by which decisions are reached and resources distributed. Such a ‘shadow side’ to distributed leadership is particularly concerning when considered in the current environment in which most UK universities are rationalising (if not eliminating) their main formalised mechanisms for bottom-up influence and decision-making – i.e. the committee structure. Does ‘distributed leadership’ just offer an empty rhetoric of engagement where greater powers are being divested to smaller groups of people? Salaman gives a warning based on past lessons:

“Although the current cult of leadership may seem (and indeed present itself) in marked contrast, even opposition, to management (hence the need for definitions to clarify the differences between the two), in functional terms they are remarkably similar in that both offer to resolve the failures of organisation by avoiding and individualising them.”

It would appear therefore, that distributed leadership is ultimately a political concept. Interpretations are invariably shaped by the stance of the perceiver – born of an ideological commitment to the collective or an instrumental commitment to performance and power. It is undoubtedly a...
concept deserving further investigation and consideration but ultimately one that is more complex and controversial than may at first appear. What remains clear, however, is that distributed leadership is not a successor to individual leadership in higher education, removing the need for formal leaders and structures, but rather something that might reside alongside individual leadership. At best it is a rhetorical term to legitimise drawing upon the capabilities and motivations of a far wider range of constituents and better aligning leadership with the collective interests of organisational members. Whether or not this happens, it would seem, remains largely a political contest.
11. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final section of the report highlights conclusions and recommendations for university leaders and policy makers as well as development priorities for the sector. In line with the overall structure of the report these have been grouped under five sections: structural/organisational, individual, social, contextual and developmental. An additional section on further research has also been included.

Structural/organisational

1. There is a widespread recognition of the importance of effective leadership and management in all of the universities studied. In addition to hierarchical or top-down leadership, however, our findings reveal the significance of bottom-up and horizontal leadership. HEIs are thus advised to review their leadership strategy to ensure that it facilitates and enables multiple forms of engagement including informal, emergent and horizontal leadership.

2. All of the institutions in our sample have recently undergone a significant period of restructuring. Our findings imply that many institutions would now be advised to consider a period of consolidation rather than continued change – to draw on and embed existing knowledge and expertise rather than endeavouring to resolve organisational challenges through continued structural redesign. Whilst restructuring may be a key part of the change process, the establishment of shared purpose, identity and social capital is largely a bottom-up process requiring dialogue, the development of relationships and collective ownership.

3. Our research indicates that leadership at the faculty, school and departmental levels is strongly linked to access to resources, specifically control of the budget and especially how any surpluses are utilised. We recommend, therefore, that when devolving responsibility attention is paid to the devolution of financial and line management control. Particular consideration should be given to the possible implications for organisational fragmentation and the disempowerment of leaders at more senior levels within the institution.

4. Where the proceeds of activities (such as teaching and research) are returned to originating schools/departments, rather than retained within a central pot, it can facilitate a more entrepreneurial culture. A risk, however, is the duplication of roles and responsibilities across the institution and the creation of organisational systems and structures that increase internal competition and inhibit inter-disciplinary collaboration. These risks can be mitigated by encouraging a sense of common professional identity amongst people in similar roles in different parts of the university – e.g. amongst HoSs, School Managers, Deans, etc.

5. Our findings point towards a professionalisation of management and leadership in higher education and acknowledge the increasing significance of professional managers working alongside academics and support staff to progress the academic mission of institutions. Formal career structures, status and reward for these groups should be enhanced and special effort made to improve the appreciation of this contribution amongst academics.

6. Across universities in our sample there is an increasing tendency to merge/cluster schools and departments – partly due to a perceived lack of sufficiently skilled leaders to take on the increasingly complex and demanding roles of Head, or a wish to reduce the complexity of line-management responsibilities at the university centre. The role of Head of School/Department is thus likely to become more trans-disciplinary and people will increasingly be expected to manage disciplines other than their own. This will require a reframing of the criteria of academic credibility, perhaps away from research excellence in a particular field to broader managerial and professional expertise. Such a process could be facilitated by the Leadership Foundation (and/or similar bodies) in helping to articulate alternative forms of ‘excellence’ in higher education.

7. The manner in which individual, group and organisational performance is assessed and rewarded is fundamental to how leadership is enacted in universities (like all organisations) and conflicting policies/procedures are likely to give rise to dysfunctional behaviour. Thus, for example, performance related pay for individuals may undermine collaboration and teamwork, and the current RAE climate may drive academics to disengage from non-RAE rated activities (including teaching, management and ‘third stream’ activities). The post-RAE environment may provide opportunities to recognise more diverse forms of contribution and efforts should be taken to acknowledge the value of these across institutions.
Within institutions, the Annual Strategic Planning Exercise is one of the main mechanisms for achieving alignment between department, faculty, and institutional strategies. It also offers an important channel for bottom-up as well as top-down influence. As such, it is recommended that this process is conducted carefully and looks at purpose and direction as well as financial business plans. Furthermore, it may be worth extending the process to other aspects of organisational strategy including HR, leadership development, Information Services and Buildings and Estates to ensure integration and consistency of approach across all parts of the institution.

Our findings highlight the importance of a clear and compelling direction to be communicated from the top of the organisation, whilst also offering genuine opportunities for consultation and participation. It is important, therefore, that a broad cross-section of representatives is involved in key strategic decision making groups and that senior leaders are visible, approachable and perceived to have a genuine empathy with the concerns of academic and professional staff.

Core to increasing engagement with leadership and management in higher education is the creation of a culture in which such activities are regarded as integral to academic work. Highlighting the central role of effective leadership and management in ensuring high-quality research, teaching, and third-stream activity is therefore a major priority for the sector so that it is embraced rather than rejected by academics. A key element of this shift will include a clearer mapping of academic progression pathways and associated activities and responsibilities.

Individual

Although this study focused on formal leadership and management roles in higher education, it was clearly evident that in order to conduct their work, these individuals are highly dependent on others in semi-formal roles, such as Director of Research, Programme Director, and Principal Investigator. Whilst such roles may not be formally recognised and rewarded by the institution, they play a vital role in organisational leadership and may well become formal leaders of the future. Universities would, therefore, be well advised to acknowledge the contribution of such roles and find ways of recognising and rewarding such individuals (and groups) wherever possible.

Within many of the institutions in our sample, there is a misalignment between measures of individual and institutional performance. This is particularly true for academics in research-intensive universities where individuals are recognised for research performance (as determined through peer-reviewed publications) over and above other aspects of their role (such as institutional leadership, pastoral care of students, and employer engagement). In such cases, academic leaders report that the provision of a personal research assistant assists in maintaining their research performance alongside their managerial duties, but in order to legitimise this investment, the provision needs to be made from higher up the organisation.

Many institutions are also finding a robust annual PDR process an effective means of better aligning individual and organisational objectives; however, ultimately, to address this issue, universities may need to work more closely with policy makers in ensuring that national measures do not compete with organisational and individual aspirations.

Our research has clearly indicated the continuing and evolving developmental needs of individuals in both formal and informal leadership roles. Universities are advised to proactively plan and manage the careers of their staff, offering a clear progression path and development opportunities throughout their time in the organisation. Furthermore, in the light of the finding that the vast majority of university leaders would like to continue in a formal leadership position, despite an initial reluctance to take on the role, there should be continued opportunities for these people to discuss their career aspirations with senior colleagues.

One way of better utilising knowledge and experience within the institution is to assign previous post-holders (such as Head of School) as mentors to incoming candidates. Many institutions already do this, usually continuing to offer a salary increment to past post holders in return for engagement in such activities.

One of the most significant findings from this research relates to the changing nature of leadership roles as people progress through the institution. In particular, it was noted that sources of power vary between line managing and non-line-managing roles. Such a situation can give rise to role conflict, lack of clarity, and difficulties in leveraging influence, especially for cross-cutting/horizontal roles. These differences need to be formally acknowledged and taken into account when preparing and selecting individuals for these roles.
Social

1. A significant feature of leadership in higher education is the team or committee approach. Within universities, strategic and operational decisions are inevitably taken and implemented by groups and, despite variations in roles and responsibilities, the primary emphasis is on participation and consensus. Nevertheless, there is a value in ensuring transparency of decision-making processes and maintaining clear lines of accountability. In order for team leadership to be effective, evidence from the sector highlights the importance of a nominated team leader ‘authorised’ to work for the collective interests of the group.

2. Leadership in universities is viewed as widely distributed. Strategic responsibility and operational control are frequently devolved and require the active engagement of a large constituency. There are also ample opportunities for people lower down the hierarchy to innovate and influence direction within their part of the organisation. The challenge, however, remains the interface between top-down, bottom-up and horizontal leadership. Universities are advised to consider how they can better nurture and maximise the effects of emergent and collective leadership. Care needs to be taken to avoid espousing the rhetoric of ‘distributed leadership’ but operating in a traditional hierarchical manner.

3. Our research has highlighted the significance of personal and professional identities in the construction and uptake of leadership roles. Of particular importance is the sense of a shared ‘social identity’ between leaders and those they are expected to lead and follow. Difficulties arise where identities give rise to conflicting loyalties and commitments (e.g. to the institution versus the academic discipline; one’s academic colleagues or ‘university management’). To this extent, universities are encouraged to consider how they can offer opportunities for leaders and managers to discuss and explore roles and identities and develop peer support networks between people at similar levels (e.g. HoS, HoD). Whilst formal structures and forums for communication may be part of the solution, findings from this study imply that ‘identity work’ is frequently facilitated through informal channels such as email groups, social gatherings (lunches, drinks, etc.) and the opportunity for people to get to know one another as individuals. The learning sets created during leadership development interventions are another useful source of such networks and should be encouraged, wherever possible, to continue beyond the end of the intervention.

Contextual

1. Leadership in higher education is strongly influenced by the broader social and political context. Overall, the UK Modernisation Agenda is pushing universities to become more commercially-orientated and market-sensitive. This is associated with a gradual shift from bureaucratic and collegial forms of organisation towards more entrepreneurial and corporate models. Brand is becoming increasingly important and universities are tailoring their provision to better meet student demand and expectations. Within this context, however, it is important that universities do not lose sight of their core purpose as educational institutions and disengage staff who are committed to broader public service values. Where a shift in value set is required this needs to be done with sensitivity and the active engagement of a wide range of stakeholders both within and beyond the institution. Furthermore, as issues affecting the sector as a whole it is advisable that universities, perhaps via bodies such as the Leadership Foundation, Russell and 1994 Groups, find ways of actively influencing the continuing political debate such that a positive and sustainable future is mapped out for the sector.

2. Within the transforming higher education sector it is likely that universities will become increasingly specialised in terms of activity, subject areas and client groups (especially post-2008 RAE). Within our research, universities already show evidence of focusing on the particular opportunities offered by their legacy, location and disciplinary mix, and are increasingly looking to build on this through strategic and commercial alliances. Internationalisation, a further priority for all institutions, was being pursued not just through increased recruitment of overseas students but also through the establishment of overseas campuses and/or international partnerships. In this climate, universities are encouraged to identify and clearly express their specific strengths and areas for development priorities. When viewing policy and performance across the sector as a whole it will become increasingly important to recognise individual differences between institutions.

3. Demographic changes and the drive to increase participation in higher education in the UK is leading to diversification of the student population (including age, ethnicity, social background and prior education). In the face of such changes universities may need to review existing policies and procedures (including entry qualifications and student support) as well as how diversification of the student body is reflected in staff...
recruitment and promotion. In particular, within all of the universities in our sample there is little in the way of gender and ethnic diversity at the senior levels. To address this balance, institutions will increasingly need to take account of the barriers to taking on such roles and consider the implementation of flexible working practices and personal support for under-represented staff groups.

4. Alongside the diversification of the student body, it is argued that students are becoming more selective in the institutions they choose to go to and the services on offer. This process has been accelerated in England by the introduction of tuition fees and the raising or removal of the cap is likely to increase this further. Competition between universities is increasingly not just on teaching and learning issues but also lifestyle choices (for staff as well as students). As a consequence effective branding and promotion is becoming essential for universities in order to ensure student recruitment as well as attracting high-profile research academics in the run up to the 2008 RAE. At the same time, European HEIs are beginning to offer courses in English, yet retain considerable state funding: it is now possible for UK students to undertake a fully-funded degree in Scandinavia or Germany, in English. These competitive pressures on what has traditionally been considered a captive ‘home’ market will call for aggressive responses and significant changes within UK HEIs.

5. The main challenges facing academic leaders in higher education are, in many respects, the same as those facing UK public sector in general, i.e. "doing more with less". The consequence is a need to engage with a broader range of stakeholder groups and respond to increasing external and internal pressures. The life of the contemporary UK academic is a long way removed from the traditional image of the “ivory tower” and stress-related illness is becoming increasingly common. Universities and policy makers would be advised to consider the potential detrimental effect of future changes and directives to ensure that this situation does not deteriorate to the extent to which people no longer choose to work within the sector. Within this, leadership development offers an important forum for sharing concerns and reconfiguring the manner in which higher education leadership operates.

6. As the UK higher education sector becomes more diverse and subject to increasing pressures there is a grave danger of fragmentation. Collaboration between universities remains largely informal to the extent that they operate as autonomous organisations and can pick and choose when and whether to collaborate. In this environment there is substantial requirement for an impartial body to provide sector-wide representation and to take a broader perspective on strategic challenges and priorities. Due to their restricted membership the Russell and 1994 Groups are not well placed to play this role (despite being an important voice for specific parts of the sector), however, organisations such as the Leadership Foundation, Universities UK and Guild-HE would be well placed to represent the interests of the sector as a whole. It is thus recommended that Leadership Foundation continues to drive the national agenda for leadership and management in higher education.

**Developmental**

1. The project identified a clear need and support in UK universities for ongoing internal and external leadership development and a gradual shift to a more bespoke, tailor-made and individualised approach with a wider range of developmental activities on offer. Several institutions in England were able to introduce dramatic change through the Hefce Rewarding and Developing Staff initiative, leaving institutions from other parts of the UK at a disadvantage in this respect. In order to establish appropriate leadership development provision within institutions financial support at national and regional levels is clearly advantageous and we would recommend greater funding provision at this level. With the shift to personalised bespoke provision, however, we would also advise organisations to remain aware of the potential for the creation of “silos” in leadership development and be alert to the need of linking individual with organisational development priorities.

2. The project also highlighted barriers to taking up a formal leadership role and some of the personal and professional tensions academics may face when engaging with leadership, management and development. Leadership and management programmes/initiatives should be designed in ways that are sensitive to structural, organisational and cultural issues, take into account individual backgrounds, skills and experiences and, wherever possible, engage the learning community at the design stage. Since many internal programmes/initiatives are delivered by external providers it is important that they should be perceived to be relevant for the higher education context and the providers deemed to be “credible” by participants.
3. Much of the evidence on the effectiveness of leadership development highlights the need for an integrated approach that aligns individual, group and organisational perspectives. To this extent, leadership development should not just be regarded as the development of “leaders” but a broader organisational development intervention. To this end, there is a need to find ways for a close engagement and cooperation between HR departments and SDUs through which a coherent approach to individual and organisational recognition, reward and development can be facilitated. Within this process, sharing and exchange of PDR and similar data between the different parts of the university could be important in identifying current and future development needs and aligning these with career progression and reward mechanisms.

4. Our findings reveal the value of facilitating dialogue across the organisation, particularly the opportunity for people to engage in debate with senior and junior colleagues. It is proposed that all leaders and manager-academics would benefit from increased support and recognition of their own leadership development and learning through greater interaction, engagement and input from the most senior people in the organisation. It is also beneficial to stimulate cross-sector debate between peers from different sectors, and more opportunities for vertical slice as well as cross-institutional development interventions are advisable. In addition, universities should recognise the value of informal leadership development including holding external leadership roles, attendance at national and international conferences, etc.

5. As support networks were identified as one of the main benefits arising from formal development programmes, participants should be encouraged (and supported) to continue interacting beyond the end of the programme. This may require some additional resource and facilitation from programme providers and the institution.

6. Succession planning was identified as a major challenge and significant priority within all universities in our sample. Institutions are advised to identify critical roles and positions within the university when initiating or improving succession planning and internal talent management processes and develop succession management tools and methodologies for deployment across the institution. The Leadership Foundation is well placed to provide a forum for sharing experiences and best practice in succession planning and talent management across the sector as a whole.

7. When designing and delivering leadership development an increased diversity of staff in terms of their backgrounds and experiences and a wide variety of their roles, employment terms and conditions should be taken into account. As polarisation between semi-formal and formal leadership roles is wider now than before, universities are encouraged to offer interim posts (such as deputy) to support Heads, Deans and other key post holders that would act as an experiential means for developing future leaders.

8. Despite recent investment in leadership development by universities and sector agencies our research clearly identifies a range of diverse and sometimes competing perspectives on leadership in higher education. Furthermore, few universities have a clearly articulated leadership and management strategy or framework. In this context there is a real danger that investment will not lead to the desired outcomes due to misalignment between leadership development and notions of leadership capability and performance within the organisation. Extensive and robust evaluation of leadership development is one mechanism for endeavouring to connect development to performance outcomes but is rarely implemented in most HEIs. As a source of expertise on this topic the Leadership Foundation may need to consider providing more active guidance and support to universities on mechanisms and ways of evaluating internal and external leadership development provision developed through research.

9. In a small number of the universities visited during this research we noted how leadership development is being used as a mechanism for promoting diversity and equality in higher education. We would advocate wider use of such an approach whereby leadership development is aligned with other organisational initiatives and used as a vehicle for exploring and progressing organisational values and priorities and promoting a positive working environment.

Further research

The research documented in this report gives valuable insights into how leadership is conceived, enacted and developed in higher education. In defining the focus of the research, however, some boundaries were drawn up around the sample and questions that limit the possibility of generalising our findings beyond university leaders in formal education. Further research is required to understand the extent to which leadership development is generalised to other sectors and settings.

For a best practice guide to leadership development for organisations see James, K. and Burgoyne, J. (2002).
roles. Furthermore, many new questions emerged as our research proceeded, each of which is worthy of further investigation. Below we highlight a number of key themes that we believe merit further empirical investigation:

1. **Our research has indicated that the work of leadership in higher education is highly dependent on the contribution of staff in leadership roles that are only partially recognised in formal organisational structures, such as principal investigators, course directors, programme coordinators, marketing managers and personal assistants. Individuals in such roles exert substantial influence on products, processes and interfaces of key strategic importance to the institution. Despite this, they are frequently not recognised on organisational charts nor formally rewarded (or developed) for their contribution. How do people in such roles perceive and contribute towards leadership of the institution? What are the incentives and barriers for taking on a more active engagement in leadership? And how do they shape and inform discourses about leadership and strategic direction within their institutions?**

2. **In a similar manner, our research has revealed how informal structures and networks (such as HoS forums, teaching and research groups, etc.) influence the operation of formal institutional systems and processes. Furthermore, the influence of such networks frequently spans organisational boundaries and may remain largely hidden to the institution. What can HEIs do to take better advantage of such networks and relationships (often referred to as "social capital") and gain a clear picture of the dynamics of leadership, influence and power across the system?**

3. **The perspective of distributed leadership points towards a widening of the boundaries of leadership and who is seen to have a legitimate voice in the leadership, governance and management of organisations. This is more than idealised ‘consultation’ or ‘collegiality’: within the increasingly marketised context of higher education what is the role played by students and other consumers of higher education products and services in the manner in which universities are run? What are the implications (both positive and negative) of a more ‘customer-focused’ approach to leadership in higher education? We advocate, as a matter of some urgency, a benchmark study of the readiness of current leaders to face these and other challenges highlighted above.**

4. **Our research has revealed a broadening of career pathways and motivations for early-career academics and administrative/professional managers. A recognition and awareness of such trends is essential if HEIs are to plan effectively for leadership and management succession at more senior levels. Further research is required to clearly map progression pathways for such individuals and to draw out the implications for selection, appraisal, reward and development.**

5. **Likewise, our research has indicated the manner in which leadership and management roles vary as people progress through the organisation. In particular, we identify a tendency to alternate between ‘horizontal’ and vertical’ leadership roles that require fundamentally different approaches (e.g. DVC vs. HoS). How can higher education leaders be developed and supported to better enable them to handle the changing and evolving nature of university leadership roles? Is it possible to identify a set of competencies, capacities and/or developmental opportunities for different leadership roles within higher education? And what would a longer-term, biographic view of leadership within universities look like?**

6. **The findings from our research support the notion that one’s engagement with and experience of leadership is closely associated with conceptions of personal, professional and social identity. What are the processes of identity formation in universities and what, if anything, can be done to resolve tensions and conflicts between multiple identities? How does leadership development (and related activities) influence identity formation and identification within HEIs?**

7. **In our analysis of university structures we identified a number of differing approaches to the devolution and distribution of areas of responsibility and accountability (including HR, finances and line management). Our research does not, however, permit a comparison of the relative effectiveness of such approaches in terms of organisational performance. Further empirical work would be required in order to highlight any such trends.**

8. **Another recommendation for further research arising from this project concerns the diversity of academic and professional managers and leaders in higher education. The demographic of university leadership remains largely that of the white, middle-aged man and does not sufficiently represent either the profile of higher education staff or students now and in the future. To this extent, research is required to identify the perceptions**
and experiences of staff in under-represented groups to reveal barriers to engagement in leadership and ways in which these could be alleviated.

9. Finally, our research has revealed an increasingly bespoke and personalised approach to leadership development in higher education. The variety and complexity posed by such approaches, however, renders effective evaluation particularly challenging. Further work is required to determine appropriate mechanisms for identifying the impact of different forms of intervention on performance at individual, group and organisational levels, across a wide range of criteria (financial, academic, social, etc.). Such work should assist individuals and organisations in the selection of an appropriate leadership development approach and techniques for its ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
12. REFERENCES


## 13. Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUT</td>
<td>Association of University Teachers (now UCU)</td>
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<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
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<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
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<td>DVC</td>
<td>Deputy-Vice-Chancellor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hefce</td>
<td>Higher Education Funding Council for England</td>
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<td>HEI</td>
<td>Higher Education Institution</td>
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<td>HERDA</td>
<td>Higher Education Regional Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>HoD</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
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<td>HoS</td>
<td>Head of School</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
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<td>HRM</td>
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<td>IIP</td>
<td>Investors in People</td>
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<td>ILM</td>
<td>Institute of Leadership and Management</td>
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<td>IoD</td>
<td>Institute of Directors</td>
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<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
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<td>LD</td>
<td>Leadership development</td>
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<td>LEA</td>
<td>Local Education Authority</td>
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<td>MBA</td>
<td>Masters of Business Administration</td>
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<td>NHS</td>
<td>National Health Service</td>
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<td>PDR</td>
<td>Performance and Development Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>PVC</td>
<td>Pro-Vice-Chancellor</td>
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<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Research Assistant</td>
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<td>RAE</td>
<td>Research Assessment Exercise</td>
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<td>SDU</td>
<td>Staff Development Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMG</td>
<td>Senior Management Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>Senior Management Team</td>
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<td>TMP</td>
<td>Top Management Programme</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Leadership Foundation for Higher Education)</td>
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<td>UCU</td>
<td>University and College Union</td>
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<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>VC</td>
<td>Vice-Chancellor</td>
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<td>VCEG</td>
<td>Vice-Chancellor/Principal’s Executive Group</td>
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ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR LEADERSHIP STUDIES

The Centre for Leadership Studies was established in 1997 as a specialist Centre within the School of Business at the University of Exeter. Our mission is to serve as a leading world centre for the advanced study of leadership and leadership development.

Our main activities include a Masters pathway in Leadership Studies, a range of shorter programmes (both open and tailored), leadership consultancy/support and a portfolio of applied and theoretical research.

Our research can be broadly grouped under four themes: personal challenges of leaders; new perspectives on leadership; leadership development approaches and impacts; and the relationship between leadership and organisational performance. The specific research interests of our faculty span a wide range of topics including leadership in Higher Education; distributed and process perspectives on leadership; leadership for environmental and community sustainability; leading change and continuity; toxic leadership and executive derailment; personal and social identity; leadership and spirituality; multi-cultural leadership; leadership in the cultural and creative industries; and critical management and leadership education.

We are a regional Centre of Excellence in leadership, partner in international leadership consortia, an advisor on leadership development to international corporations and non-governmental organisations and a world-class teaching and research centre.

For further details please visit our website, www.exeter.ac.uk/leadership

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Richard has been a Research Fellow at the Centre for Leadership Studies for over five years, conducting applied studies on leadership and management in a variety of organisational contexts. His current research explores the interface between individual and collective approaches to leadership and leadership development and how they contribute towards social change. In addition to his research, Richard teaches on a range of programmes including the MA in Leadership Studies, MBA and CPD scheme. Prior to his work at Exeter, Richard spent a period of time working for a software developer in France and as a researcher at the Institute of Work Psychology in Sheffield.

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Jonathan is Professor of Leadership and Director of Executive Education and the Centre for Leadership Studies at the University of Exeter. He has designed and directed development programmes for many companies, especially focusing on international and rapidly changing businesses. His current research looks at how leadership can foster continuity through tough transitions. Jonathan was co-founder of the International Masters in Practicing Management (IMPM), a collaboration of business schools around the world.