

# Leadership Framework for Internationalisation of Higher Education

Noel Kufaine

Namibia University of Science and Technology, Windhoek, Namibia

Email: nkufaine50@gmail.com

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## Abstract

The paper is a product of an analysis of two higher education leadership frameworks by Martin Trow and Bolman and Deal, and internationalisation of higher education literature. The analysis was conducted to establish the flexible leadership framework for the complex and everchanging higher-education and multifaced and diversified internationalisation environment. The study used an interpretive and descriptive approach. Qualitative data was generated through document analysis. Thematic analysis and qualitative analysis were deployed to identify emerging and dominating themes as a focus for interpretation. The spike on the discourse on internationalization of higher education has stimulated higher education institutions to actively straddle between responding to national needs and international demands with all its significance and ramifications. The university institutions and systems are now large and complex organisations requiring skilled management, innovative leadership, and effective frameworks for decision-making. The developed five-dimensional higher education leadership framework is emerged from the reflections on Bolman and Deal and Trow higher education frameworks and insights into leadership activities relating to the internationalisation of higher education. The framework addresses clear and specific activities, and has broader coverage, and recognises the academic, structural, and managerial imperatives. The leadership framework represents a continuous sequence in the organisation's operation. All the leadership dimensions are at the same level of importance, and the sequence of operation has no direction because the sequence is based on appropriate tasks rather than direction. The leadership framework introduces leaders to flexibility on appropriate leadership approaches in a complex higher-education and diversified internationalisation environment.

## Keywords

Higher Education, Internationalisation, Leadership, Management, University

## 1. Introduction

There is a consensus that higher education exists to create and disseminate knowledge and to develop higher-order cognitive and communicative skills in young people, such as the ability to think logically, the motivation to challenge the status quo, and the capacity for developing sophisticated values (Tight, 2022; Chan, Brown, & Ludlow, 2014). The spike on the discourse on internationalization of higher education has stimulated higher education institutions to actively straddle between responding to national needs and international demands with all its significance and ramifications. Higher education is experiencing forces of internationalisation which present many exciting opportunities to higher-education institutions; At the same time, risks and challenges are inherent in this complex and fluid environment (Sehoolle and De Wit, 2014). Analysis of the challenges existing in higher education since the inception of internationalisation three decades ago shows that higher-education leaders need a combination of leadership and management competencies. The internationalisation of higher education is believed to promote the achievement of higher-education objectives (Xu, 2021). However, the common thread is that internationalisation is interpreted and used in a broad manner and is not limited to one particular set of definitions, or international activities, or motivated by a single rationale (Xu, 2021; Zeleza, 2012; Knight, 2008). It is generally recognised that internationalisation is a complex process. Under such situation higher education institutions may experience different conceptualisation of goals, choices, outcomes and unintelligible notions of internationalisation, and being indecisive apropos of the concept without knowing its proper meaning (Xu, 2022). Similarly, the literature indicates that some leadership styles and behaviours influence various organisational outcomes (Muchiri, 2011). With the complexity of higher education, the search for practical leadership frameworks or strategies is inevitable.

## 2. Study Approach

The document analysis and literature review involved higher education leadership frameworks by Martin Trow (1985), in his article *Comparative Reflections on Leadership in Higher Education*, and Bolman and Deal (2008), in their book *Reframing Organisations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership* and internationalisation of higher education literature. The analysis was conducted to establish the flexible leadership framework for the complex and everchanging higher-education sector and multifaced and diversified internationalisation environment. The study used an interpretive and descriptive approach. Qualitative data was generated through document analysis and literature review (Bowen, 2009). Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as well as qualitative analysis were employed to identify emerging and dominating themes as a focus for interpretation (Bowen, 2009; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

### 3. Higher Education

Higher education is provided by universities and colleges; hence, it is taken to be teaching, research, and outreach activities of universities (Tight, 2022; Bloom et al., 2005). Higher-education knowledge is a primary type of knowledge produced on which all structures and processes of the academic organisation are grounded (Tight, 2022; Fullan & Scott, 2009). Hence, the emphasis within higher-education institutions is on the discovery, conservation, transmission, and application of knowledge (Tight, 2022). However, as with any other organisations, universities have goals, a hierarchical system, and structures by which to reach their objectives (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2008).

#### 3.1. Internationalisation of Higher Education Activities

The basis of internationalisation differs from nation to nation and institution to institution; however, the current trend suggests that the number of activities is also increasing (Xu, 2023; Rumbley et al., 2012). Internationalisation is also described with respect to the primary motivations or rationales which drive the concept. This may include academic standards, income generation, cultural diversity, and student and staff development (Xu, 2023; Knight, 2015). Although different institutions implement internationalisation activities based on their context (Rumbley et al., 2012), the following authors; Engberg and Green (2002), Kehm and Teichler (2007), Teferra and Knight (2008), and Bennett and Kane (2011) share a common focus. As summarized on **Table 1** below.

**Table 1.** Summary of internationalisation activities.

Engberg and Green (2002) Activities	Kehm & Teichler (2007) Activities	Teferra and Knight (2008) Activities	Bennett and Kane (2011) Activities
Inclusion of internationalisation in strategic planning.	Mobility of students and academic staff.	Student studying abroad.	Study abroad programmes.
Development of new partnerships.	Mutual influences of higher education systems on one another.	Staff collaboration in research and publishing.	Foreign language instruction.
The attraction of international staff and students.	Internationalisation of the substance of teaching, learning, and research.	University signing MOU with partners abroad.	International franchising of programmes.
Internationalised or modular curricula.	Institutional strategies of internationalisation.	University satellite campus and franchise in a new location.	Provision of internationally relevant curricula and syllabuses.
Exchange programmes for students and faculties.	Knowledge transfer.	Curriculum development with an international eye.	Recruitment of foreign staff.
Development of language policies.	Cooperation and competition.	Evaluation of curriculum delivery.	Employment of home-country staff with international experience.
	National and supranational policies regarding the international dimension of higher education.	Working towards a common frame of reference.	Cross-border research collaborations.

## Continued

Attracting foreign faculties.	Staff exchange programmes.
Evaluating brain drain.	Faculty participation in international conferences and networks.
	Internationally orientated staff training and development.
	Establishment of campuses in other countries.
	Creation of faculties within a university that bear international or cross-cultural titles.
	Funding of infrastructure development for internationalisation projects.
	Specification of internationalisation as a top priority in strategic plans and university missions.

Exploring the list of internalisation activities, the difference between authors appears to lie in their selected terminology and the description level, driven by the institution's focus and priority. It is evident that the number of activities is increasing over time; however, all activities are in line with the global consensus that internationalisation activities are diverse and are implemented differently by different stakeholders (Xu, 2021; de Wit, 2013; Rumbley et al., 2012; Knight, 2015).

### 3.2. Higher Education Leadership

Leadership literature in general has revealed that leadership and management are catalysts for a successful organisation (Tight, 2022; Fullan & Scott, 2009). However, it has been observed that the distinction between leadership and management is difficult to apply in practice despite literature consensus on the differences (Bryman, 2007). Bryman (2007) also indicated that evolution in different organisations, including higher education, has significantly altered the balance between leadership and management activities. Brayman's study on the roles of heads of departments in tertiary institutions, revealed that, despite recognising themselves as intellectual leaders, they turn into managers when they are given administrative positions (Bryman, 2007). Conversely, the trend of university leadership shows that senior professors initially managed universities. The senior academic staff selected the rector or vice-chancellor from among their ranks, sometimes with the approval of government or clerical authorities (Altbach, 2014; Tight, 2002). This arrangement worked well enough in small institutions with established roles requiring little management. With continued and expanded responsibilities, university institutions and systems are now large and complex organisations requiring skilled management, innovative leadership, and effective frameworks for decision-making (Tight, 2022; Altbach, 2014). The expansion of university tasks to include the integration of an international dimen-

sion to higher-education activities brings an added responsibility to the leaders.

### 3.3. Higher Education Leadership Theories

Leadership understanding has evolved, and it reflects the clear sequences, from trait to skills to style to behaviourist, then situational, and contingency, until transactional and transformational (Mestenhauser & Ellingboe, 2005). However, it appears that leadership styles are mostly purposefully oriented (Fullan & Scott, 2009). Although most leadership theories were drawn from the business world before penetrating higher education (Heyl & Tullbane, 2012), leadership theories are useful to higher-education leaders. According to Heyl and Tullbane (2012), theories provide guidance on leading from strength, remedying weaknesses, and exploiting opportunities.

#### Contingency/situational leadership theory

The contingency leadership theory firstly focused on situational variables in leadership personality and behaviour (Avolio et al., 2009). However, the situational leadership theory determines the leadership style which matches the situation to maximise performance. Therefore, situational leadership benefits from the situational approach which places the leader in a situation that becomes a variable of performance. Situational leadership is also based on the assumption that changes occur over time, calling for the leader to use diagnostic skills to assess these developmental changes, matching them with leadership style, ranging from directive to supportive (Yukl, 2006). Therefore, the contingency leadership theory is based on a match between the leader and the situation. This encompasses the situation, depending on the relationships between leaders and followers, the task difficulty, and the power of the leader.

#### Transformational/transactional leadership theories

Discussion about transformational leadership points to leaders and followers' relationship and level of motivation; on the other hand, the transactional leadership theory describes motivating followers by eliciting their self-interest (Avolio et al., 2004). In this case, the transactional leader exchanges pay and status for work. Therefore, influence in transactional leadership is based on bureaucratic authority. However, transactional leadership does not only bank on incentive and rewards, it also encompasses clarification of the work. As with most leadership endeavours, the transformational leadership theory activates the motivation in followers. Therefore, transformational leadership seeks to inspire vision, and to empower others; hence it is applicable to higher education (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras McGavin, 2006).

#### Connective leadership theory

The connective leadership model was developed while in search of the various behaviours used by men and women to achieve goals (Lipman-Blumen, 2006). Therefore, connective leadership is the leadership style that enhances the connectivity between the various elements of business (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005; Lipman-Blumen, 2006). This involves collaborative and joint efforts of actors that might spread globally. Therefore, the leadership task in connective leader-

ship is to synchronise workers in order to ensure that they achieve the common goal of the organisation (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005). Connective leadership is also situation based; hence businesses require leaders with a keen eye to identify the actors with skill, thereafter assigning them tasks that may be mutually beneficial to both members and the company (Lipman-Blumen, 2006). Connective leadership, through different studies, has revealed the ability to adapt leadership to suit the context (Lipman-Blumen, 2006). Hence, connective leadership is appropriate in connecting leaders with academic members, academic to academic, academic to institution, leader to institution, and institution to institution.

### 3.4. Higher Education Leadership Framework Analysis

#### Martin Trow (1985)

In the article *Comparative Reflections on Leadership in Higher Education*, Martin Trow (1985) presents leadership in higher education in large part as the taking of effective action to shape the character and direction of a college or university, presumably for the better. Leadership shows itself chiefly along four dimensions: symbolic, political, managerial, and academic. In this case, the symbolic dimension is the ability to express, project, and indeed seem to embody the institution's character, central goals, and values in a powerful way. Internally, leadership of this kind explains and justifies the institution and its decisions to participants by linking its organisation and processes to the larger purposes of teaching and learning in ways that strengthen their motivation and morale. Externally, a leader's ability to articulate the institution's nature and purposes effectively helps shape its image, affecting its capacity to gain support from its environment and recruit able staff and students. The political dimension refers to a leader's ability to resolve the conflicting demands and pressures in an organisation, both internal and external, and gain support for the institution's goals and purposes. The managerial dimension is the familiar capacity to direct and coordinate the various support activities of the institution; this includes good judgment in the selection of staff, the ability to develop and manage a budget, planning for the future, and building and maintaining organisation stability. Finally, the academic dimension shows itself, among other aspects, as the ability to recognise excellence in teaching, learning, and research; in knowing where and how to intervene to strengthen academic structures; in the choice of able academic administrators, and support for efforts to recruit and advance talented teachers and scholars.

#### Bolman and Deal (2008)

In the book *Reframing Organisations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership*, Bolman and Deal (2008), discuss four element frames for leading organisations. These include Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic. The structural frame is focused on positioning the right people in the appropriate roles, creating organisational structures, and strategically using committees and task forces to lead. The human resource frame assumes a co-dependency between the organisation and the people employed by it. Leaders see the people within the

organisation as its most important asset and competitive advantage. In the political frame, interest groups and scarce resources result in power and position being important in negotiating goals and decisions. Finally, the symbolic frame relies on creating meaning, instilling faith, and using symbols and ceremonies to develop a culture that is unified and committed to a vision.

Martin Trow (1985) and Bolman and Deal (2008) Leadership Dimensions (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Higher-education leadership dimensions from Trow (1985) and Bolman and Deal (2008).

<p>1 Symbolic Leadership—Trow (1985)</p> <p>Express the character of the institution and its central goals. Link its organisation and processes to the larger purposes of teaching and learning in ways that strengthen their motivation and morale. Articulate the nature and purposes of the institution to gain support from its environment. Recruit able staff and students.</p>	<p>1 Symbolic Leadership—Bolman &amp; Deal (2008)</p> <p>Symbolic leaders create meaning, belief, and faith. Activity and meaning are loosely coupled. People create symbols to resolve confusion, find direction, and anchor hope and faith. Culture forms the superglue that binds an organisation, unites people, and helps an enterprise accomplish desired ends.</p>
<p>2 Political Leadership</p> <p>Resolve the conflicting demands and pressures of many internal and external constituencies. Gain support for the institution’s goals and purposes.</p>	<p>2 Political Leadership</p> <p>Organisations are coalitions of assorted individuals and interest groups. Scarce resources and differences place conflict at the centre and make power the most important asset. Goals and decisions emerge from bargaining and negotiating among competing stakeholders.</p>
<p>3 Managerial Leadership</p> <p>Direct and coordinate the various support activities of the institution. Select staff members. Develop and manage a budget. Plan for the future. Build and maintain a plant.</p>	<p>3 Human Resource</p> <p>The most important asset is people. Organisations work for people, and people work for organisations. Organisations exist to serve human needs. Individuals find meaningful and satisfying work; organisations gain the talent and energy needed to succeed. Organisations invest in people as their competitive advantage.</p>
<p>4 Academic Leadership</p> <p>Recognise excellence in teaching, learning, and research. Strengthen academic structures. Choose able academic administrators. Recruit and advance talented teachers and scholars.</p>	<p>4 Structural</p> <p>Leaders place people in the most appropriate roles and relationships. Structures are designed to fit current circumstances. Analyse and restructure to remedy performance problems. Working committees are created objectively based on knowledge/skills/customers/regions.</p>

Exploring Bolman and Deal (2008) shows that these researchers place much value on matching the frame to the specific situation to enhance understanding of the organisation, helping to accomplish the intended purpose. In contrast, Martin Trow sees that leadership varies in how talents and energy are distributed. Therefore, effective action must be taken to shape the character and direction of the university. In the university context, understanding the organisation and the most effective action for shaping the direction of internationalisation is rele-

vant. The frame appears sufficient and critical regarding academic organisations and the nature of governance. Tight (2022) recognise that many factors, functions, and effects may constrain leadership influence on governance of higher education. Though, identifying the type of governance may help the type of leadership, enabling more remarkable success in achieving institutional goals.

#### Five-Dimension Leadership Frame

Although the two leadership frameworks differ in focus and coverage, they are relevant to higher education as an organisation. Bolman and Deal (2008) focus is general and aligned towards organisational structure and operations; however, this does not appear clearly in academic activities. While Trow (1985) has aligned the discussion with specific purposes, such as academic elements, he does not clarify the relationship between the organisation and the people. However, in the context of the current higher education and activities related to internationalisation, integrating the two focus points will provide an appropriate framework for higher-education leadership in internationalisation context. Therefore, the five-dimensional higher education leadership framework emerged from the reflections of Bolman and Deal (2008) and Trow (1985) and insights into leadership activities relating to the internationalisation of higher education. The five-dimensional higher education leadership framework stand out because it addresses clear and specific activities, has broader coverage, and recognises the academic, structural, and managerial imperatives. The five-dimensional leadership framework represents a continuous sequence in the organisation's operation. All the leadership dimensions are at the same level of importance, and the sequence of operation has no direction because the sequence is based on appropriate tasks rather than direction.

Higher education five-dimensional leadership framework (Figure 1).

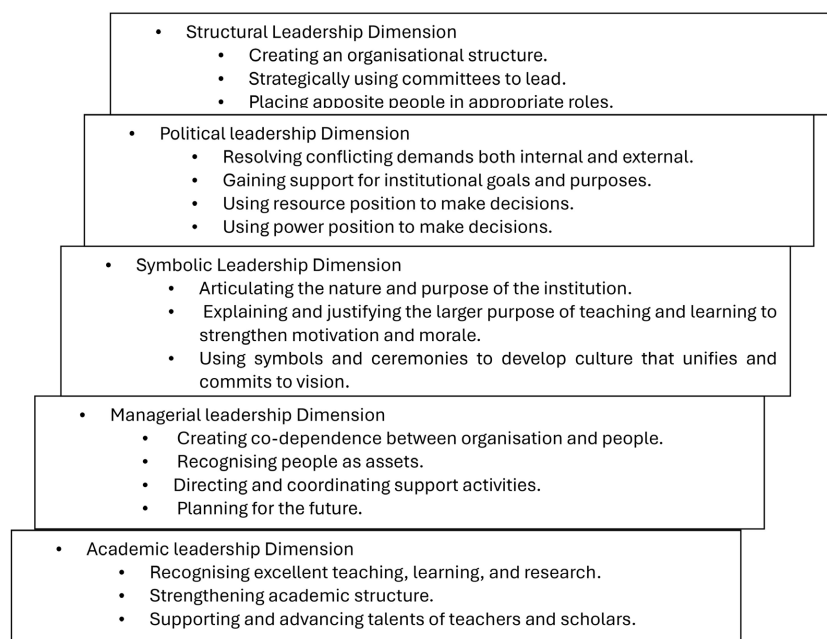


Figure 1. Higher education five-dimensional leadership framework.

### Structural Leadership Dimension

The structural leadership framework focuses on creating and recognising organisational structures, with a fully-fledged and filled structure for higher education. There is a consensus among literature on the internationalisation activities taking place at the lower level of the organisation. The lower level comprises staff assigned to work on the activities based on their expertise in their respective disciplines. This shows that internationalisation activities are also determined by expertise within the structure and disciplines. Therefore, university leadership needs to strengthen the offices by supplying the best structure and people. Some university leaderships have recognised that internationalisation is both academic and administrative matter; therefore, they are developing a structure of a stand-alone international office. Therefore, knowledge of higher education structure and an appropriate leadership framework is imperative.

### Political Leadership Dimension

The political leadership is expected to strive to gain support for the institution, to make decisions based on available resources, to make decisions based on powers of the office, and above all, to be able to resolve conflicting demands, both internal and external. Political leadership framework will be useful in cases such as prioritising resource mobilization as a key activity to support the current financial distress. Politically, the current situation demands vigorous resource-mobilization strategies. Leaders are expected to choose internationalisation activities based on substantial financial benefits and with work minimum financial implications. However, in a situation where higher education is still at the development stage, and the priorities are still internal capacity building, conflicting decision-making arises. Therefore, leaders must choose between enrolling local students as a national priority and taking on international students for much-needed financial benefit. This type of decision will be influenced by the realities at institutional or national level through a political-leadership framework.

### Symbolic Leadership Dimension

A symbolic leadership dimension is intended to help leaders articulate the nature and purposes of the institutions to develop a higher-education culture. Leaders use various methods to demonstrate commitment to internationalisation. The universities have benefited from the symbolism which has helped to increase its visibility using explicit policy for internationalisation to articulate the goals and purposes of the institution apropos of internationalisation of higher education activities. Hence, it is necessary to ensure meaningful knowledge and understanding of the relentless forces of internationalisation which will continue to urge higher-education institutions.

### Managerial Leadership Dimension

The managerial leadership dimension scrutinises the interface of people and the organisation. People are expected to contribute to the organisation; hence, they are assets, and their activities should be coordinated. Management leadership also deals with creating co-dependence, directing, and coordinating support and making plans. Internationalisation activities are initiated at different levels,

either top-down or down-top. However, all activities are facilitated by a central office in terms of memoranda of understanding and facilitation of international travel requirements. As the internationalisation opportunities unveil, leadership connects the activities with the proper department for implementation. Therefore, there is need for plans which will show commitment to internationalisation and a demonstration of managerial leadership.

#### Academic Leadership Dimension

The academic leadership dimension is demonstrated through recognition of excellence in academic matters, strengthening of academic culture, and support for advancing staff and scholars' talents. The universities generally structure academic leadership through the university committee of the senate, whose responsibility is to decide on quality aspects of academic programmes to strengthen academic culture. University leadership should strive to recognise staff development and maintain processes to encourage local lecturers to accept the internationalisation context through exposure to other countries.

Leaders in the university would practice these leadership dimensions to varying degrees. The leadership dimensions often overlap, while some operate simultaneously. The study revealed that, during internationalisation leaders make symbolic statements while providing structural support. As national goals and institutional priorities create an opposing continuum, the political and the symbolic will dominate. During financial distress, the political dimension will dominate because such situations demand negotiation before decision-making.

Therefore, depending on the context of the demand for internationalisation, one leadership dimension may suffice; but all the five leadership dimensions may be used as leadership tool for internationalisation of higher education.

## 4. Conclusion

The analysis of higher education, higher education leadership and internationalisation activities has revealed that internationalisation has positioned institutions and leaders in a continuum in which national priorities and international benefits are pulling in opposite directions. Discussions in leadership evolution reveal that contingent and transformational leadership approaches are popular within the context of internationalisation, however, connective leadership approach appears appropriate among the other leadership theories which internationalisation leadership may require. Connective leadership is apposite in connecting leaders with academic members, academic member to academic member, academic to institution, leaders to institution, and institution to institution. Although the developed five-dimensional leadership framework which emerged from the reflections on [Bolman and Deal \(2008\)](#) and [Trow \(1985\)](#) higher education frameworks and insights from leadership activities relating to the internationalisation of higher education has not been vigorously tested independently, it is relevant because it addresses issues more closely related to the higher-education leadership roles. Furthermore, the five-dimensional higher education lead-

ership framework is appropriate because it addresses clear and specific activities, has broader coverage, and recognises the academic, structural, and managerial imperatives. Additionally, the five-dimensional leadership framework represents a continuous sequence in the organisation's operation. Likewise, all the leadership dimensions are at the same level of importance, and the sequence of operation has no direction because the sequence is based on appropriate tasks rather than direction.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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