Leadership in Higher Education – A Study of Leadership among Presidents in Ireland's Technological Higher Education Sector

William Bennett

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIQR	Annual Institutional Quality Report
AIT	Athlone Institute of Technology
CIT	Cork Institute of Technology
CUA	Connacht Ulster Alliance
DCU	Dublin City University
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
DkIT	Dundalk Institute of Technology
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
GMIT	Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
HETAC	Higher Education and Training Awards Council
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IADT	Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
IOT	Institute of Technology
IOTI	Institutes of Technology Ireland
ITB	Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown
IT Carlow	Institute of Technology, Carlow
IT Sligo	Institute of Technology, Sligo
IT Tallaght	Institute of Technology, Tallaght
IT Tralee	Institute of Technology, Tralee
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LYIT	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
LIT	Limerick Institute of Technology
MTU	Munster Technological University
MU	Maynooth University
NCEA	National Council for Educational Awards
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway
PVC	Pro-Vice Chancellor

QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RGAM	Recurrent Grant Allocation Model
RTC	Regional Technical College
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
SRS	Student Record System
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TCD	Trinity College, Dublin
THEA	Technological Higher Education Association
TU	Technological University
TU Dublin	Technological University Dublin
TUSEI	Technological University for the South East Ireland
UCC	University College Cork
UCD	University College Dublin
UK	United Kingdom
UL	University of Limerick
US	United States
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
WIT	Waterford Institute of Technology

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Abstract

This thesis investigates leadership among presidents in institutes of technology in Ireland. The research seeks to answer three important research questions: firstly, what is the profile of leaders in the technological higher education sector and how do the professional characteristics of presidents impact on leadership?; secondly, what are presidents' approaches to leadership within and beyond the organisation?; and thirdly, how are leadership practices influenced by contextual factors?

The research is informed by the literature on higher education leadership and a review of the Irish higher education context, with particular focus on the position of institutes of technology within that system. The study involved a total sample of the 14 presidents of the institutes of technology in Ireland; this was important in gaining a full picture of leadership in this sector. The study is particularly timely in the context of Irish higher education, which is undergoing a period of significant change that will see the amalgamation of existing institutes to form technological universities.

The study investigates the influence of professional characteristics on leadership; key findings relate to discipline, scholarship and gender. The study identifies practices associated with successful leadership, both within and beyond the higher education institutions; and the associated leadership dispositions and approaches of presidents. The study also reports on the impact of contextual factors on leadership. Based on these findings, an integrative model of higher education leadership is proposed. The proposed model includes five key elements: leadership practice; leadership dispositions; leadership approaches; individual factors; and, contextual factors. This conceptual model will make an important contribution to the understanding of leadership and to the field of higher education leadership research. This study will be of interest to scholars in the domains of educational research and leadership, in particular leadership in higher education. The research has implications for improving the practice of leadership among senior managers in higher education and for higher education policy.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Ireland's higher education system has gone through a period of major change since the launch of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* by the Department of Education and Skills in 2011. The new national strategy introduced the prospect of re-designation of institutes of technology as technological universities. The capacity of institutional leadership is central to the successful achievement of the objectives of the national strategy and to meeting the criteria for designation as a technological university.

This thesis investigates leadership among presidents in institutes of technology in Ireland and comes at a critical time of change in Irish higher education, particularly in the technological higher education sector. This has manifest itself in a decade of change, culminating in the establishment of new technological universities, through a process of merger of existing institutes of technology. Thorn (2018, p. 171) describes how the opportunity to change status to that of technological university has become: "a significant behavioural driver for the institutes of technology". He predicts the likely impacts as including a shift from undergraduate to postgraduate programmes, a reduction in sub-degree level programme provision and higher levels of research involvement.

The field of leadership research is an important research area and various studies (for example, Gibbs, Knapper & Piccinin (2008); Middlehurst (1993); Middlehurst et al. (2009); Spendlove (2007)) have pointed towards the distinctiveness of the higher education context and its implications for leadership. Esen, Bellibas and Gumus (2020, p. 269) assert that: "conducting research on leadership in higher education is very important given the fact that the best practices are often supported by the research-based evidence". This research study, based on structured interviews with the presidents of all of the institutes of technology in Ireland in 2015, is therefore both timely in an Irish context and relevant in making a scholarly contribution to this under-researched field of study.

This chapter presents a brief introduction to the thesis, beginning with the framing of the research questions within the context of the field of enquiry. It outlines the methodology

and research design used in the study. The chapter concludes with an overview of the chapters in the thesis.

1.2 Field of Inquiry and the Research Questions

The aim of this study is to explore leadership among presidents in Ireland's technological higher education sector. It begins by exploring the professional characteristics of institutional leaders, something which has not previously been undertaken in respect of the technological higher education sector. Leadership profiles are later used to interrogate other leadership findings. The study goes on to investigate the manifestation of leadership both within and outside of the institution. Most importantly, the study explores leadership practices and how they are influenced by individual and contextual factors. The main body of literature from which the research questions are drawn is that of leadership in higher education. This field, however, sits within a broader field of leadership research. The development of research questions for this study was an iterative process in which the research questions defined, and in turn were defined by, the field of inquiry. The research questions which this study seeks to answer are as follows:

1. What is the profile of leaders in the technological higher education sector in Ireland and how do the professional characteristics of presidents impact on leadership? This question involves an examination of the profile of leaders in the technological higher education sector in Ireland at a time of significant change in the run up to the establishment of technological universities and an investigation of how the professional characteristics of presidents impact on leadership. Socio-demographic profiles are considered in terms of: tenure of president; disciplinary background; gender; scholarship; and, career history.

2. What are presidents' approaches to leadership within and beyond the organisation? Within the institution, this involves a detailed exploration of: role definition; organisational structures and culture; communications; and, leadership of internal change projects. The conduct of leadership beyond the organisation entails an

investigation of: the internal versus external focus of leadership; the scope of external leadership; collective leadership; and, leadership of external collaborations.

3. How are leadership practices influenced by contextual factors?
   This question involves an exploration of potential contextual factors including: leadership in different higher education domains (teaching and learning; research; and, engagement), changing national policy priorities; and, higher education landscape reconfiguration.

Notwithstanding the existence of a vast body of academic literature in the field of leadership, there remain significant gaps in the literature relating to leadership in higher education. In their review of literature on the leadership and management of higher education, Rayner et al. (2010) concluded that there is little empirical research and a limited literature in the area. Bryman and Lilley (2009) noted that while leadership researchers are mainly located in higher education, they rarely focus their attention on that sector. Based on a bibliometric and content analysis of leadership research in five prominent higher education journals, Esen, Bellibas and Gumus (2020, p. 267) concluded that: "leadership studies occupy a very limited space in the existing research related to higher education." Badillo-Vega, Krücken and Pineda (2019) highlight the gap in research on presidential leadership:

> Research on presidential leadership is relatively uncommon. … The importance of studying presidential leadership, however, increases as universities around the world find themselves under pressure to move away from the practices from medieval cultural institutions and become more like organizational actors. (p. 1)

Badillo-Vega, Krücken and Pineda (2019) go on to conclude that the volume of literature relating to the leadership of presidents is relatively small and does not match the exponential growth of empirical studies in other disciplines. The study of higher education leadership is particularly worthy of investigation given the increased levels of higher education participation, combined with increased competition and moves towards more financial autonomy for institutions. The unique relationship between higher education and

government and other public and social actors distinguishes it from commercial sectors and points to the need for further research on the leaders in this area. Clearly there are gaps in the literature and a need for further empirical research on leadership in higher education; this research seeks to go some way towards closing that gap.

1.3 A Qualitative Approach to the Study of Leadership in Higher Education

The approach taken in this study is qualitative in nature, a holistic approach which is grounded in a specific leadership setting and is therefore concerned with learning from that particular context. Although this study continues in the methodological tradition of the field by adopting a qualitative approach (Badillo-Vega, Krücken and Pineda (2019)), it makes an important scholarly contribution in integrating trait, behavioural, and situational approaches to the study of leadership in higher education. The study is particularly timely in the context of Irish higher education, which is undergoing a period of significant change that will see the amalgamation of Institutes of Technology (IOTs) into technological universities.

Semi-structured depth interviews were undertaken with a total sample of the 14 presidents of the IOTs in Ireland. Securing interviews with all of the target population was significant in gaining a full picture of presidential leadership in this sector of Irish higher education at a critical period in the sector's history. In-depth interviews, which are widely used in higher education leadership studies (for example: Spendlove (2007); Schilling (2009); Bryman and Lilley (2009); Van Ameijde et al. (2009); and O'Connor (2020)), were used to explore the research questions in a meaningful way. Interviews were conducted over a five-month period and lasted an average of 104 minutes each. The approach, using a structured interview schedule, was focused on gaining understanding through the use of open-ended questioning and in-depth probing of respondents. The analytical approach followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, over which the researcher moved from participant-led initial descriptive coding to researcher-led final abstraction to themes.

1.4 Thesis Overview

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter offers a brief introduction to the thesis, beginning with the framing of the research question within the context of the field of enquiry. It presents an overview of the methodology and research design used in the study. The chapter concludes with an overview of the structure of chapters in the thesis.

Chapter Two: The Irish Higher Education Landscape

This chapter presents an overview of the Irish higher education context, with particular focus on the position of institutes of technology within that system. Governance and management structures in institutes of technology, and the role of the president are examined. The chapter concludes with an overview of higher education policy in Ireland and the key drivers of change in the Irish higher education landscape.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

This chapter critically analyses the literature published in the field of higher education leadership, using a thematic approach to the review of literature. It highlights the important contributions as well as some of the gaps in the field. Research into leadership effectiveness and higher education leadership approaches are considered in detail as well as the contextual factors impacting on higher education leadership in different domains. The chapter concludes by bringing together the key themes dealt with within the literature into a conceptual framework which informs the approach to research design and analysis in the thesis.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

This chapter addresses the methodology and methods used in this research study. The first half of this chapter outlines the methodology of the study, including the researcher's

ontology, epistemology and positionality. This is followed by an articulation of the research questions being addressed. The second half of the chapter concerns itself with the research methods employed, including data collection methods, sampling, ethics and the approach to data analysis.

Chapter Five: Findings

This chapter presents a detailed thematic analysis of findings from the structured interviews with the presidents of all of the institutes of technology in Ireland. Analysis of the findings resulted in breaking these down into overarching themes, which then form the basis for the overall structure of this chapter. Findings are presented in respect of: leadership profile and influence of professional characteristics; approaches to leadership within and beyond the organisation; and contextual influences on leadership. These findings are further discussed and refined in Chapter 6.

Chapter Six: Discussion

This chapter synthesises the insights from the research study and reflections on the findings in the light of academic literature. The key themes explored are: the influence of socio-professional characteristics; leadership practice; and contextual influences on leadership. It goes on to propose a conceptual model of higher education leadership based on the research findings. The proposed model includes five key elements: leadership practice; leadership dispositions; leadership approaches; individual factors; and, contextual factors. The proposed model is an integrative model of higher education leadership.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Implications

This chapter draws together the key findings and the resultant implications as well as presenting research limitations and recommendations for further study. The contribution of this study to theory, policy and leadership practice is articulated. It brings the thesis to a conclusion and assesses the implications of key findings for leadership research and for Irish higher education policy and practice.

1.5 Summary

This chapter set out to introduce the reader to the thesis and contextualise the study within an evolving higher education landscape in Ireland. This study is situated within the field of leadership research. The research aim and research questions are set out and framed within the context of this field of enquiry. The methodology and research design used in the study are briefly described. The chapter concludes with an overview of the remaining chapters in the thesis.

Chapter Two

The Irish Higher Education Landscape

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the Irish higher education system, with particular focus on the position of IOTs within that system. Governance and management structures in IOTs, and the role of the president are examined. This is important in contextualising leadership within this group of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The chapter reviews higher education policy in Ireland and the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DES, 2011) which sets out the long term vision for higher education. The key drivers of change in the Irish higher education landscape are investigated, focusing in particular on those issues with implications for higher education leadership. The chapter concludes with an overview of the Technological Universities (TUs) which have the potential to reshape the future of the higher education landscape. The technological university trajectory, in particular, is critical in making sense of leadership as possibly the most significant structural change in higher education in Ireland in 50 years.

2.2 The Irish Higher Education System

2.2.1 Higher Education Institutions

Overview of HEIs

The state funded higher education system in the Republic of Ireland comprises seven universities, two technological universities, nine institutes of technology (seven of which are working to form three further TUs) and four other specialist colleges. The technological higher education sector in Ireland refers to IOTs and TUs; of the original 14 IOTs, three merged to form Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) in January 2019 and two merged to become Munster Technological University (MTU) in January 2021. Clancy (2015) identified two defining characteristics of Irish higher education as it being primarily state aided and focusing mainly on full-time students, with private providers accounting for less than 10% of provision. Official Higher Education Authority (HEA, 2019) statistics

indicate total higher education student enrolments of 231,710 in the Republic of Ireland, with the Universities accounting for 55% and IOTs making up 40% of total registrations; colleges account for the balance of 5% (p. 6). Universities plus colleges account for 57% of undergraduate new entrants, while IOTs account for 43% (p. 3).

The HEIs listed in Appendix 1 together account for 95% of publicly funded higher education students (HEA, 2019). Clancy (2015) provides a comprehensive account of higher education in Ireland in a comparative perspective. Higher education enrolments in Ireland have increased almost seven-fold over the past four decades, reflected in significant increases in the rate of admission to higher education over that period. Using a composite higher education participation index, Ireland is ranked eighth of 28 OECD countries, putting it in the top one-third of developed countries for higher education participation, and with relatively low levels of inequality in access to higher education. Clancy's (2015) comparative analysis further points to fewer part-time students and more students enrolled on short-cycle and applied programmes, compared to other countries.

Institutes of technology

Institutes of Technology were originally established as Regional Technical Colleges (RTCs) beginning in the early nineteen seventies, primarily in response to an evolving need for vocational training and education. Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) has a distinct provenance and was formed out of a confederation of six vocational colleges in 1978 and established in its recent form (up to it being subsumed into the new TU Dublin in 2019) by separate legislation in 1992. Government policy to establish the RTCs was based on a binary model, in which expansion would be concentrated in the non-university sector (Clancy, 2005). Thorn (2018) contextualises the development of the RTCs as part of a wider trend towards massification of higher education and increasing diversity in the range of higher education providers in the developed world from around 1960. Non-university HEIs had also been formed in the UK, France, Germany and Portugal around this time. The first seven RTCs opened between 1970 and 1972 in Carlow, Sligo, Athlone, Dundalk, Waterford, Letterkenny and Galway, followed by the opening of new RTCs in Cork (1974) and Tralee (1977). A new awarding body, the National Council for Educational Awards

(NCEA), was established to validate and make sub-degree and a limited number of degree level awards for the new institutions; postgraduate awards were subsequently introduced in the mid-1980s (Thorn, 2018).

The passing of the Regional Technical Colleges Act (1992) marked a significant milestone in gaining autonomy from the Vocational Education Committees (VECs). During the 1990s, four further colleges were established in Tallaght, Limerick, Dún Laoghaoire and Blanchardstown. In 1997 and 1998, all of the RTCs were retitled institutes of technology. The Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999) represented another important milestone in the development of the sector; section 29 provided that: "a recognised institution may request the Council to delegate to it the authority to make higher education and training awards". By 2006, all institutes had received delegated authority to make awards to level 8 (honours bachelor degree) and the process of awarding delegated authority at postgraduate level had commenced (Thorn, 2018).

The Institutes of Technology Act (2006) was significant in that it created a broadly similar relationship with the HEA as the universities, as recommended by the OECD (2004). It also provided for greater institutional autonomy and a statutory guarantee of academic freedom for the IOTs:

> In Ireland, the high level of legal autonomy enjoyed by higher education institutions is a major strength of the system. The principle is enshrined in the Universities Act of 1997, and the Institutes of Technology Act of 2006 grants limited autonomy to the institutes of technology. Academic freedom of individual staff is central to higher education and this principle is also enshrined in both the Universities Act of 1997 and the Institutes of Technology Act of 2006. (DES, 2011, p. 39)

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act (2019) for the first time gave IOTs full awarding powers up to and including master's degrees. With the exception of doctoral degrees (for which existing delegated authority provisions still apply), IOTs are now full designated awarding bodies. The 14 IOTs represent a broad spectrum of institutions in terms of scale. While various measures of institutional size can be used (for example, student numbers, staff numbers, turnover), one

objective measure is government funding, based on audited student numbers in the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM) funding mechanism. This does not represent the full scale of student-related income, which also includes a separate student contribution and tuition fees as well as income from students with separate sources of funding. It does, however, represent an objective comparator, based on audited student numbers submitted by all institutions to the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Table 2.1 below presents a rank order of institutions by size based on the HEA's RGAM funding allocation (the 2016 RGAM allocation was used as relates to student numbers at the time of fieldwork in this study).

Table 2.1: Institutes of Technology in Order of Size Based on HEA RGAM Allocation

Institute	Funding (€m.)
DIT	61.9
CIT	37.7
WIT	26.5
LIT	24.4
GMIT	22.6
IT Sligo	17.9
AIT	16.7
IT Carlow	16.3
DKIT	15.0
IT Tallaght	13.4
LYIT	11.4
IT Tralee	11.2
ITB	9.2
IADT	7.7

Source: HEA Grant Allocation 2016

Watson (2014), reflecting on his experience leading a large and a small institution, suggests that while there are some individual capacities for institutional leadership which are generic, institution size does matter. While the IOTs are small in an international context, they can be grouped into three broad categories, based on relative size: small; medium and large. Five institutes are categorised as large (funding of €22.6m. – €61.9m.); five are categorised as medium (funding of €13.4 – €17.9m.) and four are categorised as small (€7.7m. – € 11.4m.). Table 2.1 points to a relatively diverse sector in terms of scale; the largest HEI is more than eight times the scale of the smallest. Excluding the two largest and

two smallest institutions, the spread is much smaller, with the middle 10 having a narrower size range (funding of €11.2m. – €26.5m.).

Positioning of institutes of technology within higher education

In this section, the evolution of the role and mission of IOTs is explored, culminating in their potential re-designation as technological universities. The positioning of IOTs is best understood by comparison with the missions and roles of universities in order to explain how they are positioned within the higher education system. Understanding the technological university trajectory is critical in making sense of leadership within the sector as this is perhaps the most significant structural change in higher education in Ireland since the formation of RTCs a half century ago.

Universities, IOTs (and heretofore DIT) and TUs have a separate legislative basis, reflective of their different origins, missions and degree awarding powers. Appendix 2 lists the functions of RTCs (Regional Technical Colleges Act (1992)) and the objects and functions of universities are included in Appendix 3 (Universities Act (1997)). Section 5 of the Regional Technical Colleges Act (1992) identified the principal functions of colleges as being:

> To provide vocational and technical education and training for the economic, technological, scientific, commercial, industrial, social and cultural development of the State with particular reference to the region served by the college.

The intended remit of the RTCs was clearly narrower than that of the universities and their differentiated missions were underlined in their respective legislation. While the universities aimed to educate higher level professional, technical and managerial personnel, the functions of colleges related to vocational and technical education and training. Thorn (2018) argues that government policy supported this differentiation, with a focus on sub-degree provision in the RTCs and degree level provision in the universities. It is also noteworthy that the role of the Minister for Education is much more evident in the legislation pertaining to the then RTCs. Scholarly research is the first stated objective of universities, while colleges were tasked to engage in research "subject to such conditions as

the Minister may determine", with the implicit understanding that such research would be applied or technical in nature.

Until recently, the other significant difference between the two elements of this binary system was in relation to awarding powers. The universities, as designated awarding bodies, can make their own awards, while degree awards from RTCs were originally made by the NCEA (and later by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) which in turn was subsumed into a new organisation, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), in 2012 (see section 2.2.4 below)). Institutes were later given delegated authority to make their own awards under the provisions of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act (1999) and in 2019 were given full awarding powers up to master's degree level.

The *Review of Higher Education in Ireland* by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) noted a strength of the higher education system in Ireland as being the diversity of the system and: "the extent to which a diversity of mission has been maintained between the university and the institute sectors, as well as within the sectors" (OECD, 2004, p. 20). Thorn (2018, p. 4) argued that this differentiation manifests itself in both the types of programmes and types of students enrolled. In the early years of the then RTCs (now IOTs), most of the programmes were sub-degree level. More recent figures show a significant shift, with Higher Certificates and Ordinary Bachelor Degrees together accounting for just 14% of full-time undergraduate enrolments in Ireland, while the vast majority of undergraduate enrolments are Honours Bachelor Degrees (83%) (HEA, 2019, p. 8). IOTs account for a greater number of part-time students (51% of total enrolments) compared to universities (42%) and colleges (7%) (HEA, 2019, p. 7).

IOTs and universities are differentiated to some extent in terms of undergraduate full-time provision as highlighted in Table 2.2 below. Four of the top five undergraduate disciplines are common to each institution type, although the balance of enrolments between these disciplines does vary. Services features in the IOT, but not in the university, top five; while natural sciences, mathematics and statistics feature in the university, but not in the IOT top five. The percentage of students categorised as engineering, manufacturing and

construction is twice as high in IOTs compared to universities, while the opposite applies in the case of arts and humanities.

Table 2.2: Full-time Undergraduate Enrolments by Sector – Top Five Disciplines

Discipline Ranking	Universities (% of total undergraduate enrolments)	Institutes of Technology (% of total undergraduate enrolments)
1	Arts and humanities (23%)	Business, administration and law (22%)
2	Business, administration and law (19%)	Engineering, manufacturing and construction (16%)
3	Health and welfare (17%)	Health and welfare (15%)
4	Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (14%)	Services (12%)
5	Engineering, manufacturing and construction (8%)	Arts and humanities (12%)

Adapted from: HEA (2019, p. 8)

The distinction between IOTs and universities is more marked at postgraduate levels, both in terms of the absolute number of enrolments and the discipline mix. The universities have a significantly higher number of full-time postgraduate students (19,159 versus 3,741) and of research degree enrolments (8,333 versus 1,682) relative to the IOTs (HEA, 2019 pp 9-20). Drilling down into the research degree enrolments reveals further differences. 90% of research degrees in the universities are doctorate, compared to 59% in the institutes of technology; the corresponding figures for master's research degrees are 10% and 41% respectively. (p. 20)

The Hunt Report (DES, 2011) reinforced the necessity for the diversity of research missions:

> While both universities and institutes of technology may be active across the spectrum of research and innovation activities, they should have different emphases. While all institutions will be expected to maximise the impact of their activities on business, the public sector and the wider community, universities should specialise in basic and applied research, and institutes of technology should concentrate more on applied research and

closer to-market development and enterprise support, with a critical regional support dimension. (p.70)

As evidenced in Table 2.3 below, the IOTs and universities only share two of the top five disciplines in common at full-time postgraduate level, although business, administration and law is the number one discipline at postgraduate level for both. At both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, the discipline of information and communication technologies is an important differentiator for IOTs.

Table 2.3: Full-time Postgraduate Enrolments by Sector – Top Five Disciplines

Discipline Ranking	Universities (% of total full-time postgraduate enrolments)	Institutes of Technology (% of total full-time postgraduate enrolments)
1	Business, administration and law (19%)	Business, administration and law (26%)
2	Health and welfare (18%)	Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (13%)
3	Social sciences, journalism and information (12%)	Arts and humanities (13%)
4	Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (11%)	Information and communication technologies (12%)
5	Education (11%)	Engineering, manufacturing and construction (11%)

Adapted from: HEA (2019 p. 9)

Perhaps the most important differentiator between IOTs and universities is in the realm of access and participation in higher education (see Tables 2.4 and 2.5 below). IOTs have a significantly higher percentage of students from manual skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled socio-economic groups while the universities have a greater percentage of students from employers and managers, higher professional and lower professional socio-economic groups.

Table 2.4: HEA Equal Access Survey – Socio-Economic Group by Sector

	Universities (%)	Institutes of Technology (%)
Employers and managers	19.0	15.2
Higher professional	14.5	6.7
Lower professional	10.2	7.7
Non-manual	10.6	11.0
Manual skilled	8.1	13.2
Semi-skilled	4.5	7.3
Unskilled	3.8	6.7
Own account workers	6.3	7.4
Farmers	6.0	6.4
Agricultural workers	0.3	0.6
All others gainfully occupied, and unknown	16.9	17.6

Adapted from: HEA (2019, p. 23)

The IOTs and universities differ greatly in terms of both the number and nature of international students in their profile. On the one hand, the HEA's Equal Access Survey of full-time new entrants to year one of undergraduate programmes indicates that IOTs have a greater percentage of non-Irish students, in particular African students (see table 2.5 below). On the other hand, 10% of students in universities pay high income generating non-EU fees, compared to 3% in IOTs. (HEA, 2019, p. 39)

HEA (2019, pp. 26-36) statistics indicate that IOTs have a greater proportion of full-time mature students (defined as aged 23 or over on the 1 January of the year of entry to the HEI) compared to universities. Over a five year period from 2013/14 to 2017/18, mature students made up between 11% and 18% of all full-time new entrants to IOTs, but only between 6% and 8% in universities.

Table 2.5: HEA Equal Access Survey – Ethnic Group of Respondents by Sector

	Universities (%)	Institutes of Technology (%)
Irish	85.8	83.2
Irish traveller	0.2	0.2
Any other white background	6.9	8.7
African	1.7	3.1
Any other black background	0.2	0.2
Chinese	1.3	0.5
Any other Asian background	2.2	2.3
Other	1.7	1.9

Adapted from: HEA (2019, p. 24)

Thorn (2018) concludes that part-time provision has been a central part of the mission of the IOTs from the outset. IOTs account for the majority of part-time students in Irish higher education; 51% of part-time higher education students are in IOTs versus 42% in universities and IOTs account for more than 68% of undergraduate part-time student enrolments (HEA, 2019).

Universities and IOTs have a broadly similar profile in terms of gender of academic staff (45% female in universities, 44% female in IOTs), although the ratio of academic to other staff varies greatly between the two HEI types. Academic staff make up 62% of the combined number of academic and non-academic staff and 55% of total staff, including research and specialist staff in IOTs; the corresponding figures for the university sector are 48% and 30% respectively (HEA, 2019, pp. 37-38). These statistics are a manifestation of the historical primacy of teaching over research in the IOT sector.

Gender

Madsen (2011) argues that there is a need for more women to be positioned to take on critical leadership roles in higher education and to do more to prepare and support more women for leadership roles. Fitzgerald (2020) uses an inside/outside metaphor to describe how women navigate their positioning as leaders in higher education. She argues that

gendered structures and processes and masculinist management practices persist. Blackmore (2014) suggests that the changing nature of universities, with greater diversification of work and differentiation between universities, may actually serve to exacerbate the gender divide.

The landmark *HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions* (HEA, 2016) painted a picture of gender inequality in higher education in Ireland, with females accounting for only 28% of the highest paid positions. Overall, there was evidence of greater inequality in the university sector, particularly at senior levels of decision making: "since the establishment of the first Irish university 424 years ago, there has never been a female president" (p. 45).

At governance level, the report highlighted that between 20% and 48% of governing body/authority members were female in the seven universities, with five universities meeting a 40% gender threshold; the sector average was 39% female representation. This compares with a range of between 37% and 59% in the 14 IOTs, with eight institutions meting the 40% gender threshold, and a sector average of 44%. Female representation on the seven university academic councils ranged from 20% to 53% (with just one university exceeded the 40% gender threshold) and a sector average of 34%. This compared to a range of 30% to 64% in the IOTs (with six institutes exceeding 40%) and a sector average of 40%. At executive management level, female representation ranged from 22% to 46% in the universities, with two universities exceeding the 40% gender threshold and a sector average of 32%. In the case of the IOTs the range was 0% to 53%, with three of the institutes meeting the 40% threshold and a sector average of 32% (pp. 105-108).

The following sections present an overview of the government departments and other statutory agencies which have responsibility for funding, oversight and quality assurance of higher education in Ireland. The Department of Education and Skills (DES), its successor Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) have been instrumental in shaping policy that will result in radical changes to the higher education landscape in Ireland, with important implications for leadership of HEIs.

2.2.2 Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

The new government Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) was established in August 2020, taking over responsibility for higher education from the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The DES previously held overall responsibility for the entire Irish education system including primary, post primary, further education and training and higher education. In 2017, a new post of Minister of State (junior minister) for Higher Education was created within the DES.

The establishment of a full government department (DFHERIS) in 2020 was a significant recognition of the strategic importance of higher education in Ireland. The newly established department has responsibility for policy, funding and governance of higher and further education and research. The Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science is a senior cabinet ministry and is supported by a Minister of State. Publically funded HEIs received their funding based on an annual grant from DFHERIS (previously DES) to the Higher Education Authority (HEA), who then allocate funding to individual institutions.

2.2.3 Higher Education Authority (HEA)

The HEA is the statutory planning and development body for higher education in Ireland. Section 3 of the Higher Education Authority Act (1971) sets out the general functions of the HEA as:

(a) furthering the development of higher education,

(b) assisting in the co-ordination of State investment in higher education and preparing proposals for such investment,

(c) promoting an appreciation of the value of higher education and research,

(d) promoting the attainment of equality of opportunity in higher education,

(e) promoting the democratisation of the structure of higher education,

(f) promoting the attainment and maintenance of excellence in learning, teaching and research in higher education (added as an amendment in Section 52 of the Institutes of Technology Act, 2006).

The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DES, 2011) articulated a revised remit for the HEA, with the following key operational functions:

- Establishing high level Key Performance Indicators and engaging in strategic dialogue with the sector and individual institutions;
- Leading and driving the process of structural change; and balancing institutional consolidation with system diversity;
- Collecting and analysing data on higher education so that it can better inform and advise the Department;
- Leading and driving the implementation of the new funding model and allocating funding to institutions on foot of that;
- Leading the process of analysing and forecasting demand for higher education, taking particular account of the labour market and evolving skills needs;
- Ensuring an appropriate balance between demand and supply with due regard to the maintenance and enhancement of quality;
- Analysing and funding of infrastructural requirements;
- Cooperating and engaging with international counterparts and in particular deepening cooperation with higher education in Northern Ireland. (pp. 90-91)

In 2013 the HEA was given responsibility by the DES for implementing a new performance framework and annual strategic dialogue process for the higher education system; this is addressed in more detail in Section 2.4 below. Clancy (2015) describes how the HEA has assumed a new remit as regulator of the higher education system. The *THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology* (2018) lists the HEA's written oversight agreements with the IOTs as comprising: performance compacts; the annual governance statement; and, the financial memorandum (pp. 49-50). In discharging its functions in respect of IOTs, the HEA, in addition to the new performance framework, has a range of formal (annual, other than as noted in the list below) reporting requirements which IOTs are subject to, including: the annual report, the financial statements, the annual governance

statement, the statement on system of internal control; and the HEA financial memorandum (THEA, 2018, pp. 32-40; 79-83). In addition, IOTs are required to make data returns to the HEA, including: Student Record System (SRS) returns (twice per annum); Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM) return; tuition fees claim return; and staff returns (quarterly).

Importantly, the HEA also allocates the budget provided by the state to publicly funded HEIs, including, since 2006, the IOTs. HEIS are required to submit an annual budget submission which is followed by an annual 'Accountability and Budget' meeting with the HEA. Allocation of funding to HEIs uses a formula-based system called the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM):

> The major core grant element is distributed taking account of student enrolments, by programme level, in the different subject price groupings, differentiating between: non-laboratory subjects; subjects with a studio, laboratory or fieldwork element; laboratory-based subjects; and clinical stages of medicine and dentistry. (Clancy (2015), pp. 244-45)

Clancy (2015) explains that further performance-related funding and targeted strategic funding is allocated on a competitive basis and concludes that:

> New governance arrangements have led to a centralisation of power in the hands of the HEA … the executive agency for the entire publicly funded third-level system … thereby allowing it to claim to be the *regulator* of the HE system." (pp. 270-71)

He further argues that at institutional level this has led to a concentration of power in the hands of senior administrators at the expense of academic staff. The implications of this new model of performance-related funding on institutional leadership is explored in this research and findings are reported in Chapter 5.

2.2.4 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

QQI was established under the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 and the full list of its functions are set out in the Act. The following

extracts from Section 9 of the Act outlines the key roles of QQI as they impact specifically on IOTs as providers:

- Review and monitor the effectiveness of providers' quality assurance procedures.
- Validate programmes of education and training, and review and monitor the validated programmes.
- Establish the standards of knowledge, skill or competence to be acquired by learners before an award can be made by the Authority or by a provider to which authority to make an award has been delegated.
- Make awards, delegate authority to make an award where it considers it appropriate and review and monitor the operation of the authority so delegated.
- Determine policies and criteria for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners, and monitor the implementation of procedures for access, transfer and progression in relation to learners by providers.
- Establish a code of practice for the provision of programmes of education and training to international learners.
- Authorise the use of the international education mark by a provider that complies with the code of practice.
- Establish, maintain and develop a database providing information on awards recognised within the Framework, programmes of education and training which lead to awards recognised within the Framework and any other programmes the Authority thinks appropriate.

The Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Act (2019) extended the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act (2012). Among the most important new provisions was the granting of full designated awarding body status to IOTs up to master's degree level. This was a significant milestone in the development of IOTs, moving them closer to the status of the universities, although full designated awarding body status in respect of doctoral provision remained solely the preserve of the traditional universities and the new technological universities. QQI publishes a suite of policies and guidelines to give effect to its functions. The review and monitoring of the effectiveness of providers' quality assurance procedures and of delegated authority operates primarily via the submission of an Annual Institutional Quality Report

(AIQR) and an annual dialogue meeting with institutions, in addition to cyclical institutional reviews of all HEIs.

The following section explores the governance and management structures in the technological higher education sector. This serves to situate the role of the president within broader institutional structures. This is particularly relevant because in this thesis I will explore the different manifestations of leadership in organisational structures and processes.

2.3 Governance and Management Structures in the Technological Higher Education Sector

Governance of HEIs in Ireland is shared across three mutually dependent elements: a governing authority: the decision making body; a chief officer (president/provost/ director): the executive management; and an academic council: representing the academic community (DES, 2011, p. 92). The Institutes of Technology Act (2016) underscored the autonomy of IOTs and the enshrined the principle of academic freedom (THEA, 2018). In the IOTs, governance structures typically take the form of: governing body; president (who chairs the executive management group - executive board/executive committee); and academic council. In addition, most institutions also operate a middle management committee and a range of sub-committees within these structures.

2.3.1 Governing Body

Section 6 of the Regional Technical Colleges Act (1992) established the governance structures for the colleges. The governing body of a college consists of a chairman and 17 ordinary members, and the director (this role has subsequently been retitled as president) of the college. Governing body members are appointed by the Minister on the recommendation of the local VEC (VECs have subsequently been replaced by Education and Training Boards). The secretary of the governing body is normally the secretary/financial controller of the Institute (THEA, 2018, p. 16).

The *THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology* (2018) clarifies the reserved functions and the statutory and regulatory requirements for governing bodies. The governing body has a number of reserved functions, including: deciding on courses of study and appropriate research and development work; entering into arrangements with other institutions; acquisition and management of land and other assets; appointment of director (president) and other staff; appointment of an academic council; establishment of dispute resolution procedures; and approval of a strategic development plan. Other statutory requirements include the preparation and submission of an annual budget to the HEA (for other information and reporting requirements to the HEA, see Section 2.2.3 above); regulations regarding the conduct of the affairs of the college; and procedures for the admission and exclusion of students.

Additional regulatory requirements derived from the *THEA Code of Governance for Institutes of Technology* (2018) include: approval of the acquisition and disposal of significant assets; capital projects; treasury and risk management policy; and establishment of subsidiaries. The governing body is also required to approve: the annual report, the financial statements, the annual governance statement, the statement on system of internal control; and the HEA financial memorandum (THEA, 2018, pp. 32-40; 79-83).

2.3.2 Academic Council

Section 10 of the Regional Technical Colleges Act (1992) formally established academic councils:

> Each college shall have an academic council appointed by the governing body to assist it in the planning, co-ordination, development and overseeing of the educational work of the college and to protect, maintain and develop the academic standards of the courses and the activities of the college.

The composition of academic councils are not prescribed by legislation, though they are required to have a majority of academic staff among their membership.

2.3.3 President

Executive responsibility for running the institute rests with the president, other than the reserved functions of governing body as outlined above. The original heads of the RTCs were called principals, later directors and finally – since 2007 – presidents. In operating as a collective, the RTCs originally formed a Council of Colleges, which later became a Council of Directors, then Council of Directors of Institutes of Technology, then Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI) and ultimately the Technological Higher Education Association (THEA) (Thorn 2018).

The standard contract of employment for an IOT president (see Appendix 4) does not typically set out detailed duties but states that the president shall be the chief officer of the institute in accordance with Section 9 of the Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992 and the Institutes of Technology Act 2006. The tenure of presidents in the Regional Technical Colleges Act (1992) was not specified; however the Institutes of Technology Act (2006) reduced the term of office to a maximum of 10 years.

2.4 National Higher Education Policy and the Drivers of Change

This section builds on the preceding overview of higher education structures and goes on to review higher education policy, in particular the drivers of change in Ireland's higher education landscape. In this section, I will present the policy context which underpins the challenges and opportunities for higher education leadership. Current higher education policy has been significantly shaped by the report of the wide ranging review of higher education in Ireland undertaken by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2004. The subsequent *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DES, 2011) represents the national policy framework for Irish higher education and sets out the long term vision for higher education. This was followed by the development of the System Performance Framework – "the second phase of evolution of the changed relationship between the State and HEIs" (HEA, 2018, p. 3). Finally, the *Action Plan for*

Education 2016-2019 (2016) sets out the strategic policy direction and goals for the entire education sector and contains a number of significant goals for higher education. While recognising that these sit within a wider set of strategies and policy documents (as articulated in HEA (2018), and DES (2019)), it is these four matters that are the main focus of this section.

This policy context broadly mirrors that of the UK during the same period. Middlehurst (2013) highlights the key policy and political messages between 2004 and 2013 in the UK as relating to: funding (particularly from 2008 to 2013); efficiency and value-for-money; performance and responsiveness; institutional differentiation; and, a more prominent focus on leadership, governance and management. Similar themes permeate the section which follows.

2.4.1 OECD Review of Higher Education in Ireland (2004)

In 2003 the Department of Education and Science invited the OECD to undertake a review of higher education in Ireland. The terms of reference of the review were wide ranging:

> They cover the whole higher education system and invite the examination of policy issues and options in all aspects of the system from its role, its strategic management and structure, teaching and learning, research and development, investment and financing and international competitiveness. (OECD, 2004, p. 5)

The review team made 52 separate recommendations, and while it is not intended to address these in detail here, there were a number of recommendations which had far reaching consequences for the IOT sector. The review team commented that one of the strengths of the tertiary education system is: "the extent to which a diversity of mission has been maintained between the university and the institute sectors, as well as within the sectors" (p. 20) and went on to recommend that Ireland retain a differentiated higher education system. The review also recommended bringing the universities and institutes under a new common funding authority. Importantly, in transferring the IOTs to the new authority the review team recommended that:

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The managerial controls on their freedom to manage themselves to meet institutional objectives be reviewed with a view drastically to lightening the load of external regulation … institutes of technology be given the same freedom to initiate new academic programmes as the universities. (p. 22)

In relation to research, the review team concluded that: "it would not be effective to fund institutes of technology as a sector to support a generalised research function on the same basis as the universities" (p. 34) and that IOTs should continue to concentrate on applied research. Controversially, the report went even further and recommended that where degree awarding powers for doctoral awards had been granted, they should be rescinded. While these recommendations were largely welcomed by the IOT sector, there were concerns with some recommendations, in particular the recommendations that there be no further transfers into the university sector and the proposed rescinding of doctorate awarding authority (Thorn, 2018).

A number of the report recommendations pertaining to IOTs were put in place as part of the Institutes of Technology Act (2006), including designation to the HEA and changes to the governing body appointment process, while the controversial recommendation to rescind doctoral awarding powers was not implemented. Notwithstanding the recommendation that there be no further transfers into the university sector, both DIT and WIT went on to seek designation under 'Section 9' (under the Universities Act, 1997) in 2006, followed by an application from CIT in 2008 to become a technological university. In parallel, the presidents of the remaining IOTs were working on proposals for a National Technological University of Ireland. In 2009, amid mounting political pressure the government announced plans for a new national strategy for higher education; it would be a further two years before the final strategy was published and in the meantime the three university applications were put on hold (Thorn, 2018).

2.4.2 National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030

The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DES, 2011) is the key policy driver in Irish higher education and its publication has heralded a period of unprecedented change. The strategy, commonly referred to as the *Hunt Report* (named after Colin Hunt, Chair of the Higher Education Strategy Group), set out the long term vision for fundamental reform of higher education in Ireland:

> In the decades ahead higher education will play a central role in making Ireland a country recognised for innovation, competitive enterprise and continuing academic excellence, and an attractive place to live and work with a high quality of life, cultural vibrancy and inclusive social structures. (p. 26)

The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (2011) made detailed recommendations in respect of: teaching and learning; research; engagement with the wider society; internationalising higher education; system governance; a coherent framework to facilitate system-wide collaboration between diverse institutions; and a sustainable and equitable funding model. The report highlighted the need for more higher education graduates, for broadening participation, particularly from under-represented socio-economic groups and for part-time and flexible learning.

The National Strategy further proposed the concept of "regional clusters" (pp. 98-99) of independent HEIs working together. The regional clusters concept was further developed by the HEA (2012), setting the core objectives of regional clusters as: co-ordinated regional engagement; student pathways; improved quality through opportunities for centres of excellence; co-ordinated programme provision (including "elimination of unnecessary duplication" (p. 9)); and, shared services. The HEA also identified a possible configuration of four regional clusters.

The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (2011) recommended a reconfiguration of higher education – "consolidation across the higher education system" (p. 99) – while arguing that compared to the university sector, "the challenges of scale and

the rationale for change in the institutes of technology are more immediate" (p. 101). The National Strategy argued strongly for retaining "complementary and diverse missions for different institutions" (p. 97) and ruled out formal mergers between IOTs and universities or the conversion of any IOT into a university on the basis that this would dilute institutional diversity and "would be detrimental to the breadth of Irish higher education provision" (p. 102).

The major structural change proposed in respect of IOTs was that institutions should commence a process of consolidation, while allowing amalgamated institutions to apply for re-designation as: "a form of university that is different in mission to the existing Irish universities" (p. 102) – a Technological University (TU). On the one hand, the report recommended institutional consolidation and the rationalising of programmes, while on the other hand offering the carrot of amalgamated IOTs potentially becoming TUs:

> The institute of technology sector should commence a process of evolution and consolidation; amalgamated institutions reaching the appropriate scale and capacity could potentially be re-designated. A process should be put in place to allow institutes of technology that have emerged from a process of consolidation to apply for designation as a technological university. (p. 109)

It would be a further six years before the TU enabling legislation (Technological Universities Act (2018)) and it was January 2019 before the first TU came into being.

2.4.3 Action Plan for Education 2016-2019

The *Action Plan for Education 2016-2019* (DES, 2016) sets out the ambition to "provide the best education and training system in Europe" (p. 13) and establishes strategic goals for education, together with related objectives and detailed actions. It is argued in the plan that this is a realistic ambition given that Ireland already has a top five position in Europe in a number of areas, including higher education participation. The plan sets out five strategic goals and while the majority of its 139 specific actions relate to primary and post primary education, there are detailed actions within the plan relating specifically to higher

education. An extract of the key actions within the plan (and by extension government policy priorities) for higher education under the five strategic goals, is summarised below:

1. Improve the learning experience and the success of learners. Specific actions for higher education include: improve transitions and broaden undergraduate entry (p. 22); enhance digital capacity in teaching and learning (p. 24); and, implement the Foreign Languages in Education Strategy. (p. 25)

2. Improve the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage or learners with special educational needs. Specific actions for higher education include: implement the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education (p. 29); reduce non-completion (p. 29); engage directly with disadvantaged communities (p. 29); report on the barriers to lone parents accessing HE (p. 29); and, increase financial supports for postgraduate students (p. 29);

3. Help those delivering education services to continuously improve. Specific actions for higher education include: reform initial teacher education (p. 35) and rollout the national professional development framework for higher education practitioners (p. 38).

4. Build stronger bridges between education and the wider community. Specific actions for higher education include: rollout new graduate survey for higher education (p. 45); complete review of higher education funding model (p. 45); develop a new systems performance framework for higher education (p. 45); increase the numbers of entrants to higher education studying on a flexible basis (p. 47); provide employability statements for courses (p. 47); benchmark entrepreneurial activity in higher education (p. 48); increase enrolment of postgraduate researchers (p. 49); grow programmes and funding to support postdoctoral researchers (p. 49); introduce the International Education Mark (p. 49); and, publish an international education strategy (p. 49).

5. Improve national planning and support services. Specific actions for higher education include: publish the second higher education system performance report (p. 52); review/reform the funding model (p. 52); develop a new systems performance framework for higher education (p. 52); advance legislative reform (including the Technological Universities Bill) (p. 53)

The key higher education objectives and actions set out in the plan relate to increasing participation rates among disadvantaged students; increasing work placement, upskilling and reskilling opportunities; developing higher education apprenticeships; increasing the numbers of postgraduate students; and, reforming the funding model.

The *Action Plan for Education 2016-2019* (DES, 2016) is complemented by the publication of updated annual action plans which set out the priorities for the Department and its agencies (and by extension the HEIs) for the year as well as monitoring actions against published timelines.

2.4.4 Higher Education System Performance Framework

The origins of the annual dialogue process can be traced back to a recommendation contained in the *OECD Review of Higher Education in Ireland* (2004):

> Relations between the new Tertiary [Higher] Education Authority and publicly funded individual institutions of tertiary [higher] education should be governed by a contract renewable annually on the basis of an institutional strategic plan approved by the TEA [HEA], after a formal face to face dialogue with the institution. (p. 53)

This recommendation was further developed in the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DES, 2011) which recommended that:

> The HEA should engage in strategic dialogue with higher education institutions and at a sector-wide level with a view to aligning the strategies of individual institutions with national priorities and agreeing KPIs against which institutional performance will be measured and funding decided. (p. 91)

In 2013 the DES introduced the new performance framework and strategic dialogue process for the higher education system, giving the HEA responsibility for its implementation. The performance framework set out national priorities for higher education, articulated as seven high level system objectives:

1. To meet Ireland's human capital needs across the spectrum of skills by engaged institutions through a diverse mix of provision across the system and through both core funding and specifically targeted initiatives;
2. To promote access for disadvantaged groups and to put in place coherent pathways from second level education, from further education and other non-traditional entry routes;
3. To promote excellence in teaching and learning to underpin a high quality student experience;
4. To maintain an open and excellent public research system focused on the Government's priority areas and the achievement of other societal objectives and to maximise research collaborations and knowledge exchange between and among public and private sector research actors;
5. To ensure that Ireland's higher education institutions will be globally competitive and internationally oriented, and Ireland will be a world-class centre of international education;
6. To reform practices and restructure the system for quality and diversity;
7. To increase accountability of autonomous institutions for public funding and against national priorities. (DES, 2013, p. 2)

This new performance framework represented a significant departure in terms of the reporting relationship between HEIs and the HEA and in terms of potential implications for their funding:

> Implementation of the framework is overseen by the HEA through a process of 'performance compacts' and 'strategic dialogue' where higher education institutions set out a set of strategic and performance objectives which are formally agreed with the HEA, with reference to the Minister's framework. The strategic dialogue process includes a facility for increasing levels of performance-related funding penalties (albeit rarely used) whereby the HEA may reduce funding to institutions where there is evidence of significant deviation from the agreed performance compact. (HEA, 2018, p. 10)

The process required each publicly funded HEI to submit a draft performance compact together with a proposed institutional profile. The HEA then convened a panel to meet with individual institutions, before a final compact was agreed. Reporting at the end of the first cycle of performance compacts, the HEA (2017, p. 6) concluded that: "the Irish higher education system has delivered what has [been] asked of it and more, both in meeting the

demand for increased student places and in meeting the increased skills needs of a recovering economy". Thorn (2018) concluded that weaknesses in strategic management in some institutions were highlighted and the HEA also recognised that this this performance was unsustainable unless wider issues, including historic funding deficits, were addressed. A separate HEA (2016b) report highlighted the seriousness of the funding difficulties faced by IOTs:

> The overall funding for the IOT sector declined from €554.5mn in 2008 to €334.9mn in 2015. This happened at a time when student numbers increased significantly (by 24%), and funding per student therefore contracted by 34%. In recent years, a number of IOTs have been facing financial difficulties and have relied on reserves to meet underlying deficits. (p. 13)

The report concluded that six of the institutes faced immediate sustainability challenges, with a further four potentially at risk.

In line with the *Action Plan for Education 2016-2019* (DES, 2016), a successor System Performance Framework 2018-2020 was published in January 2018 with six key system objectives, reflecting the future priorities of government for the higher education system:

1. Providing a strong talent pipeline combining knowledge, skills & employability which responds effectively to the needs of our enterprise, public service and community sectors, both nationally and regionally, and maintains Irish leadership in Europe for skill availability
2. Creating rich opportunities for national and international engagement which enhances the learning environment and delivers a strong bridge to enterprise and the wider community
3. Excellent research, development and innovation that has relevance, growing engagement with external partners and impact for the economy and society and strengthens our standing to become an Innovation Leader in Europe.
4. Significantly improves the equality of opportunity through Education and Training and recruits a student body that reflects the diversity and social mix of Ireland's population
5. Demonstrates consistent improvement in the quality of the learning environment with a close eye to international best practice through a strong focus on quality & academic excellence

6. Demonstrates consistent improvement in governance, leadership and operational excellence. (DES, 2018, pp. 8-9)

While the two frameworks have broadly similar objectives, they differ in emphasis. The original framework had an explicit reference to system restructuring and an implicit undercurrent of rationalisation, reflecting the major changes in the configuration of the higher education system envisaged during that period; the successor framework placed an increased emphasis on governance, enterprise and engagement.

2.5 Towards Technological Universities

The OECD *Review of Higher Education in Ireland* (2004) recommended that: "for the foreseeable future there be no further institutional transfers into the university sector" (p. 22). Notwithstanding this recommendation, no less than three separate applications for designation as a university were submitted between 2006 and 2008 and intense political pressure followed. The National Strategy established the potential for a group of amalgamated for IOTs to be re-designated as a new type of university, a Technological University (TU):

> distinguished from existing universities … based on career-focused higher
> education … and on industry-focused research and innovation … will also be expected to
> play a pivotal role in facilitating access and progression (particularly from the workforce)
> … with a particular focus on programmes at levels 6 to 8 in science, engineering and
> technology and including an emphasis on workplace learning. (p. 105)

Thorn (2018) argues that Ireland is unique in this regard in creating: "a set of institutions largely from green fields and provided for their progression to the point at which some of them can, and will assuredly, become universities" (p. xi). The final shape of the Irish higher education landscape is still emerging but it was clear that the path to TU designation would be challenging:

It is government policy to maintain the binary divide, and while university status of a particular sort – technological university – has been offered, attaining designation as universities is proving remarkably problematic for those institutes of technology seeking it. (Thorn, 2018, p. 8)

The National Strategy set out broad criteria for assessing any application to become a TU and envisaged a two-stage process for application for re-designation. The process and criteria for designation as a TU were further developed by the HEA in an important policy paper in 2012 (*Towards a future higher education landscape,* HEA, 2012) to give effect to the objectives and recommendations of the National Strategy. It set out the TU criteria and the proposed four stages in the process for designation as a TU:

Stage 1 - Expression of Interest
Stage 2 - Preparation of Plan to Meet Criteria
Stage 3 - Evaluation of Plan
Stage 4 - Application for Designation as a Technological University (HEA, 2012, pp. 12-13)

The final TU criteria in the Technological Universities Act (2018) drew heavily on this paper; the full set of eligibility criteria from the Technological Universities Act (2018) are included in Appendix 5. A significant change was that the Act dropped the requirement articulated in the National Strategy to merge in advance of making an application to become a TU: "When, over time, the amalgamated institutes of technology demonstrate significant progress against stated performance criteria, some could potentially be re-designated as technological universities" (DES, 2011, p. 103). Section 29 of the Technological Universities Act (2018) simply allowed for applications from two or more institutes to become TUs. In addition, the quantitative staff profile criterion requiring 45% of higher education academic staff to hold a level 10 (PhD) qualification was relaxed in the Technological Universities Act (2018) to require 45% "of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level" to hold a doctoral degree (p. 31). Clancy (2015, p. 290) presents a useful summary of the government's approach: "The current strategy has all

the hallmarks of a carrot and stick approach, whereby the trade-off for agreement to merge and consolidate is the hoped-for reward of university designation."

The Technological Universities Act (2018) describes the functions of a TU as well as the governance and other structures, including governing body, academic council and president. Significantly, TUs in contrast to IOTs, have full awarding powers and may borrow money. The Act also sets out the application process to become a TU and the eligibility criteria. The detailed eligibility criteria are included in Appendix 5; of these, two of the research-related quantitative criteria pose the greatest challenges, namely:

1. Of the students of the applicant institutes registered on a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level … at least 4 per cent are research students registered on a programme which leads to an award to at least masters degree level … a plan that demonstrates … that they would have capacity, as a technological university to increase within 10 years … to at least 7 per cent (p. 31)
2. Of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level … at least 45 per cent hold … a doctoral degree … the applicant institutes have a plan that demonstrates … that they would have capacity, as a technological university, to increase, within 10 years … to at least 65 per cent (p. 32)

The passing of the Technological Universities Act in March 2018 was a landmark moment in the evolving Irish higher education landscape and heralded a step change in the pace of change. It was quickly followed by the first TU application, from the TU for Dublin Alliance (DIT, ITB and IT Tallaght), and the subsequent government decision in July 2018 to approve the establishment of Technological University Dublin in January 2019. In May 2020, the Minister for Education and Skills announced that Ireland's second technological university, Munster Technological University (MTU), would be formally established on 1 January 2021 with the merger of CIT and IT Tralee. The AIT-LIT consortium made an application to become a TU in November 2020 and the Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest was approved by the Minister for formal establishment in October 2021. This was followed by applications from the Technological University for the South East Ireland (TUSEI) consortium (comprising WIT and IT Carlow) in April 2021 the

Connacht Ulster Alliance (CUA), (comprising GMIT, LYIT and IT Sligo) in May 2021. The scale of the changing landscape is immense, leaving only two of the original 14 IOTs, DKIT and IADT, remaining outside of the technological university development process.

2.6 Summary

This chapter provided the context for this research, with particular focus on the position of institutes of technology within the Irish higher education system. It presented an overview of higher education policy and the key drivers of change which have important implications for institutional leadership in the Irish higher education system. Governance and management structures in IOTs were examined, with particular reference to the role of the president. The chapter concluded with an overview of the trajectory towards TUs and the potential for TUs to reshape the future of the higher education landscape in Ireland.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter critically analyses the literature published in the field of higher education leadership, using a thematic approach to the review of literature. This literature is situated within the broader field of leadership research. Section 3.2 presents an overview of the important contributions to the field of leadership research and the key theoretical models emerging from this literature. Section 3.3 presents a review of leadership research in the field of higher education. This is followed by a review higher education leadership practice in Section 3.4 and research into leadership effectiveness in higher education (Section 3.5). An examination of the contextual factors impacting on higher education leadership in different domains is presented in Section 3.6. The chapter concludes with a synopsis of the key themes dealt with within the literature and an outline of the conceptual framework proposed to underpin the research methodology and analysis within this thesis.

3.2 Leadership Research

3.2.1 Management and leadership

The volume of research publications relating to the field of leadership gives some indication of the scale of this field of study. In review of 200 leadership intervention studies, Avolio et al. (2009) concluded that leadership interventions have an impact on a variety of outcomes. Burns (2003) situates leadership as a multidiscipline which can borrow from and synthesise existing intellectual resources and generate new ones using a range of conceptual and empirical tools. On the other hand, leadership is a complex process and a simple formula for leadership does not exist. Block (2014) refers to leadership as: "a supercomplex phenomenon" (p. 233), that can be better understood by relating leadership research to the philosophical disciplines. Taylor and de Lourdes Machado (2006) argue that this complexity is reflected in attempts to define leadership:

> Numerous scholars have attempted to define leadership for many decades. The different
> definitions reflect the theoretical insights of the models that emerged across time. The time

spectrum shows a theoretical evolution that advanced from trait theories, to behavioural
theories, followed by contingency theories to transformation and transaction theories. (p.
140)

One of the early debates revolves around whether or not leadership is a separate and
distinct field or whether it is in fact synonymous with management. The seminal works of
Burns (1978) and Zaleznik (1977) represent an important point of departure between
management and leadership, with leadership being proposed as a distinct strategic function
and management as a more operational function. Fitch and Brunt (2016) argue that in
colleges and universities, leadership emphasises larger directional issues, while
management typically focuses more on day-to-day needs. However, that distinction
between the fields of leadership and management remains the subject of some discussion
and debate. Nienaber (2010) undertook a content analysis of 80 works in the fields of
leadership and management and asserts that: "despite the continuing debate, a conclusive
answer as to the respective roles and significance of management and leadership in the
success of the business seems evasive" (p. 662). The analysis of the tasks as presented in
management and leadership literature suggests that management and leadership are
inextricably interwoven. Kotter (1990) argues that most organisations are over-managed
and under-led.

Taylor and de Lourdes Machado (2006) contend that the concepts of leadership and
management of HEIs are often confused and misunderstood and suggest that a meaningful
understanding of both concepts can only be reached when they are examined in relation to
one another:

> Leadership and management are not the same things. Not every leader manages well, and
> not every manager has leadership capabilities. However, the concepts are sufficiently
> intertwined that an understanding of their relationship to one another is important.
> Management is often seen as a relatively structured process for achieving organisational
> objectives within the parameters of prescribed roles. Leadership is more often viewed as an
> interpersonal process of inspiring and motivating followers with a focus on long-term
> institutional aspirations and changes. (p. 142)

Rayner (2008), in a reflective narrative on leadership to deal with complexity, diversity and change in education, argues that the distinction between leader and manager has not been helpful and that the separation of the two terms is an artificial one.

3.2.2 Classification of leadership theories and emerging themes

Yukl (2010) provides an insightful classification of leadership theories and empirical research, identifying five major research approaches: trait; behavioural; power-influence; situational; and integrative approaches. The trait approach, one of the earliest approaches to the study of leadership, is based on the idea that some people are natural leaders and have traits not possessed by others. For example, Riggio and Reichard (2008) investigated the impact of emotional and social skills on leadership effectiveness:

> The social skills, including social expressiveness, social sensitivity, and social control, are expected to contribute to such leadership processes and outcomes as public speaking, coaching, effective listening, and impression management. (pp. 176-177)

On the other hand, Lapid-Bogda (2007) argues that leaders of all styles both excel and have areas for development in each competency area. The behavioural approach focuses on how managers spend their time or concentrates on identifying effective leadership behaviour. Power-influence research examines influence processes between leaders and others. The situational approach highlights the importance of contextual factors, such as characteristics of followers or type of organisation, which influence leadership processes. Yukl (2010) asserts that most theories have inadequate explanatory processes and need to pay more attention to situational processes or context. The integrative approach considers more than one type of leadership approach. Avolio (2007) similarly argues for the benefits of a move towards a more integrative focus. This requires working towards identifying and integrating all elements that constitute leadership, including consideration of the relevant actors, context, time, history, and how all of these interact with each other, recognising that leadership is a function of both the leader and the led and the complexity of the context.

Yukl (2010) goes on to describe three other types of distinctions commonly used in the leadership literature: leader versus follower-centred theory; descriptive versus prescriptive theory; and, universal versus contingency theory.

Most leadership theories focus on the leader, while a small amount of research and theory examines characteristics of the followers; yet, each of these represents a significant field of its own right. Avolio, Walumba, and Weber (2009) argue that further research is needed on how followership is construed across different industries and cultures. Billot et al. (2013) argue that followership represents a continuum of relationships with formal leaders, ranging from acquiescence to co-construction. Separately, Avolio (2007) reported on the very limited number of published studies that specifically focused on how follower characteristics moderated the effects of leadership. Most leadership research has either ignored the role or followers or has considered them to be passive. Avolio et al. (2009) suggest that future research should take a follower-centric approach in looking at how the well-being of followers affects the ability of the leader and followers to perform.

Leadership theories may also be distinguished by the extent to which they are descriptive or prescriptive. Descriptive theories explain leadership processes while prescriptive theories specify what leaders must do to become effective (Yukl 2010).

The final distinction between leadership theories is the extent to which they are universal or contingency. A universal theory describes some aspect of leadership that applies to all types of situations while a contingency theory refers to aspects of leadership that apply to some situations but not to others (Yukl 2010).

Avolio et al. (2009) discuss the emergence of cognitive leadership approaches within the leadership literature with a focus on explaining the way leaders and followers think and process information. They highlight the potential of the working self-concept to understanding the challenging issue of how important identity is. On the other hand, they concede that its use within the leadership literature has been somewhat limited so far, while arguing that there is clear scope for cognitive approaches to complement the existing body of literature into the future:

This broad stream of research has potential for enhancing existing theories of leadership in terms of helping to explain how leaders and followers attend to, process, and make decisions and develop. Additional work linking self-concept and meta-cognitive theories to research on leadership will no doubt contribute to our understanding of how leaders and followers actually develop. (Avolio et al. (2009), p. 428)

Pellegrini and Scandura (2008) review research on the area of paternalistic leadership, an emerging area for leadership research. The two different approaches within paternalistic leadership are authoritarianism, with its focus on asserting authority and control and benevolence, with its emphasis on concern for the well-being of subordinates. On the one hand, they recognise the challenges associated with the authoritarian content in some conceptualisations of paternalistic leadership, in particular in cultures that have a more egalitarian set of values. On the other hand, they suggest that benevolent forms of paternalism may represent a breakthrough in leadership research, one that could be that generalisable across cultures.

Avolio et al. (2009) suggest that the growing interest in the area of cross-cultural leadership is driven in part by globalisation and the necessity for many leaders to work across an increasingly diverse set of locations. Research has focused on identifying global leaders who are able to lead across a variety of cultures as well as comparative research on the effectiveness of leadership in different cultures.

Comprehensive reviews by Avolio et al. (2009) and Yammarino et al. (2005) highlight a number of emergent areas in leadership research (in addition to those already addressed in this section), including: complexity leadership; substitutes for leadership; e-leadership (Jameson (2013) also highlights the need for much more research and development in e-leadership); situational leadership; path-goal theory; vertical dyad linkage; information processing and implicit theories; romance of leadership; influence tactics; self-leadership; multiple linkage; multilevel and leaderplex; and, individualised leadership. Other interesting areas to emerge within the literature include remote leadership (Neufeld et al. 2010); aesthetic leadership (Hansen et al. 2007); constructive-developmental theory

(McCauley et al. 2006); leadership and social capital (Van De Valk and Constas 2011); and leadership efficacy (Hannah et al. 2008).

Based on an integrative review of the literature, Avolio et al. (2009) offer a useful overview of the important trends in the field of leadership research. They suggest that the field is advancing a more holistic view of leadership and that more positive forms of leadership are emerging. More thought is being given to investigating what genuinely develops leadership and how leadership impacts on outcomes, while the role of followers is increasingly recognised. At an organisational level, leadership is increasingly distributed and shared and e-leadership is becoming more commonplace. Overall, leadership is being seen as a complex and emergent dynamic within organisations.

3.2.3 Leadership styles

Debates centred around transformational versus transactional leadership styles have been to the fore within the leadership literature. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) were influential in signalling the need to shift the focus away from transactional models (based on how leaders and followers exchange with one another) to transformational approaches to leadership. Transformational or charismatic approaches to leadership suggest that leaders raise followers' aspirations, and as followers identify with the vision of the leader, they perform better in their work. Burns (2003) later argued that both transformational and transactional leadership approached have become a focus of research and of debate. Avolio et al. (2009, pp. 428-429) conclude that accumulated research over recent years supports the importance of transformational leadership:

> Charismatic/transformational leadership was positively associated with leadership effectiveness and a number of important organizational outcomes across many different types of organizations, situations, levels of analyses, and cultures such as productivity and turnover. Over the past decade, a lot of research effort has been invested in understanding the processes through which charismatic/transformational leaders positively influence followers' attitudes, behaviours, and performance.

The processes through which transformational leaders influence followers have been extensively studied. Beugré et al. (2006) proposed a conceptual model of transformational leadership, the main thrust of which is that the external environment influences the emergence of a particular form of transformational leadership. Interestingly, the model proposes three types of transformational leaders: revolutionary, evolutionary and transgressor. The model posits that volatility of the environment in which the organisation operates and the degree of receptivity of the members are likely to influence the type of transformational leader to emerge. In a relatively large-scale study of leaders and subordinates, Hautala (2005) found that a relationship between personality and transformational leadership exists. However, subordinates' and leaders' ratings did not converge, thus emphasising the significance of self-awareness as a leadership quality.

Employing an experimental study, Lyons and Schneider (2009) found that transformational leadership styles are beneficial to performance relative to management by exception leadership:

> In congruence with theory, this study partly demonstrated that transformational leaders can benefit subordinate's perceptions of social support, efficacy beliefs, negative emotions, and stressor appraisals relative to transactional styles. (p. 746)

However, the experimental method employed, including the use of a student sample, is a significant limitation of the research reported. Not all studies have supported transformational leadership. In a study of 100 managers and their subordinates by Whittington et al. (2009), tests of significance were unable to establish leader-follower agreement on perceptions of transformational leadership for follower outcomes. Avolio et al. (2009) contend that a number of areas of transformational leadership still deserve further attention. Future research could focus on determining why some leaders engage in charismatic or transformational leadership and others do not while research is also required to explore the process and boundary conditions for transformational leadership with beneficial work behaviours. Future research attention could also focus on how to link transformational leadership to the emerging literature on emotions and leadership. Research opportunities also exist in exploring transformational leadership at the strategic level and in cross-cultural research.

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One of the emerging pillars of interest in the field of leadership is referred to as authentic leadership. Avolio et al. (2009) refer to authentic leadership as being transparent and ethical leader behaviour that encourages openness in sharing information needed to make decisions while accepting followers' inputs. Despite some debate around definitions, they conclude that there is consensus in the literature on the components of authentic leadership: balanced processing (objectively analysing relevant data before making a decision); internalised moral perspective (being guided by internal moral standards, which are used to self-regulate one's behaviour); relational transparency (presenting one's authentic self through openly sharing information and feelings as appropriate for situations); and, self-awareness (demonstrated understanding of one's strengths, weaknesses and the way one makes sense of the world). Avolio et al. (2009) argue that work on defining and measuring authentic leadership is, as yet, in its infancy and future research will need to examine how it relates to other constructs, such as moral perspective and spirituality, and how it is viewed in other contexts. A future focus is also required on authentic leadership development, with an emphasis on whether leadership can actually be developed.

Spirituality and leadership is another emergent theme within the literature. On the one hand, many authors have attempted to examine how a greater sense of spirituality may be fostered in the workplace. Uusiautti (2013), for example, focuses on the concept of caring leadership: "leaders' ability to use their position in a manner that exemplifies *love-based* action" (p. 484). On the other hand, defining what spirituality means remains a major challenge. Avolio et al. (2009) contend that it will be difficult to conceptualise and measure such constructs until there is an agreed definition of what constitutes spirituality and leadership.

In addition to the debates and arguments discussed above, many others have been raised in the literature but a more detailed discussion of all of them is beyond the scope of this thesis. One of these areas is negative leadership. Based on a study of 42 middle and top managers, Schilling (2009) produced a concept map of eight negative leadership behaviours: insincere; despotic; exploitative; restrictive; failed; active avoiding; passive avoiding; and,

laissez-faire. Yet, Klaus and Steele (2020) found evidence of a low rate of destructive leadership behaviour, as perceived by employees, in US higher education.

3.2.4 Limitations of leadership research

There have been significant criticisms of leadership research, many of which are implicit in the alternative conceptualisations and theories of leadership. Hunter et al. (2007) concede that their discussion of leadership research paints a negative view of typical leadership studies, while accepting on the other hand that there are many well-done studies. They question assumptions made about subordinates, assumptions about leaders, assumptions about the leadership context and assumptions about the leadership process in the typical leadership study. The end result of these potentially false assumptions may be inappropriate conclusions for a specific study and, potentially more problematic, these results could lead other researchers to base study design decisions on the outcomes of such efforts.

Having introduced various ways of conceptualising leadership, Yukl (2010) highlights the major biases in conceptualisation. Despite evidence from research that shared responsibility and empowerment is more effective than leadership by a single individual, much of the research emphasises the importance of the single, heroic leader. Most of the theory and research on leadership effectiveness is at a dyadic level, between a leader and a single follower. Leadership needs to be conceptualised as an essential organisational process for improving work:

> The growing interest in strategic leadership and distributed leadership in teams, networks, and organizations indicates progress is being made in overcoming the fixation on dyadic processes (p. 496).

Yukl (2010) argues that there are methodological shortcomings in much of the leadership research which can limit progress in learning about effective leadership. These shortcomings are summarised in Table 3.1 below.

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Table 3.1: Common and Uncommon Features in Leadership Studies

Feature	Common	Uncommon
Research method	Survey study	Experiment
Research objective	Replication	Explore new issues
Level of processes	Individual/Dyadic	Group/Organizational
Time frame	Short-term	Longitudinal
Causality	Unidirectional	Reciprocal
Criterion variables	One or two	Several
Mediating variables	Few or None	Several
Data sources	Single	Multiple
Sample	Convenience	Systematic selection
Level of leader	Supervisor	Executive

Source: Yukl (2010), p. 502

As highlighted in Table 3.1, most leadership research tends to rely on surveys, with questionnaires filled out by leaders or their subordinates. Yukl (2010) argues that greater use could be made of qualitative methods, multiple methods and multilevel analysis. Avolio et al. (2009) similarly suggest that more future research in leadership will be mixed methods.

Fleenor et al. (2010) reviewed the literature on the use of self-other rating approaches in relation to leadership in the workplace. They concluded that there were a variety of individual and contextual influences on self-ratings that can affect their accuracy as well as their congruence with others' ratings. These factors include: biographical characteristics; personality and individual characteristics; and, job relevant experiences. Likewise, others' ratings are influenced by a variety of factors, including: the rater's cognitive processes; characteristics of the rater; rater motivation; contextual factors; and, rater-ratee interactions and expectations.

Yammarino et al. (2005) undertook a comprehensive, narrative review of the literature on leadership with an explicit focus on levels-of-analysis issues. Their research reviewed 348

conceptual and empirical publications in 17 primary areas of leadership research. They describe their assessment as a: "troubling state-of-the-science" (p. 905) and in that vein it is worth noting four key findings. Firstly, they concluded that fewer than 30% of the leadership publications explicitly addressed levels-of-analysis issues. Secondly, in relation to measurement, just over a half of empirical publications specified concepts and measures appropriately. Thirdly, only 15% of publications used some multi-level analysis technique correctly. Finally, just 43% of empirical publications demonstrated an appropriate alignment of theory and data at the correct level of analysis. In light of these findings Yammarino et al. (2005) offer a set of theoretical, measurement, data analytic technique and inference drawing recommendations for conducting multi-level research in all areas of leadership. Methodological concerns are also raised by Schriesheim and Cogliser (2009) who contend that the field of leadership research needs to pay more attention to measurement issues in general and construct validity in particular. Kempster and Parry (2011) suggest grounded theory, informed by critical realism, as an alternative approach to research into the phenomenon of leadership.

This section introduced the important contributions to the field of leadership research and the key theoretical models emerging from this literature. It also highlighted the methodological and other limitations of current leadership research. The following section moves from the broad field of leadership research to a more focused review of leadership research in the field of higher education.

3.3 Leadership Research in Higher Education

Van Wart (2003) argues that the literature on leadership with a public-sector focus is a fraction of that in the private sector. Middlehurst et al. (2009) trace the increased interest in the study of leadership in higher education to a broader shift from administration to executive management in the public service which sought to promote management practices that emanated from the private sector. Pollitt (1990) describe this shift towards promoting management practices from the private sector as "New Public Management". Kliewer (2019) asserts that current approaches to leadership learning and development in

public higher education in the US affirm neoliberal ideology and suggests that it is necessary to have a model of higher education leadership that can resist neoliberalism. Juntrasook (2014) argues that there are contested meanings of leadership in academia and found that there were at least four overarching meanings of leadership commonly espoused by academics: leadership as position; leadership as performance; leadership as practice; and, leadership as professional role model. The first two meanings reflect hierarchical structures, while the latter two reflect the everyday context of higher education.

Studies of leadership in higher education have pointed towards the distinctiveness of the higher education context and its implications for leadership. In a study of departments which excelled at teaching, Gibbs, Knapper & Piccinin (2008), for example, found that leadership played a major role in creating teaching excellence in world-class research-intensive universities, with the leadership role of the head of department being central. The work of Middlehurst (1993) was amongst the early pioneering pieces in the study of leadership in higher education. Middlehurst et al. (2009) identify some features of higher education that make it distinctive and which may have implications for leadership: (1) organisational complexity in higher education and its implications for practice and development (including structural complexity, different constitutions and funding sources and social and cultural complexity); (2) multiple lenses and the impact of context; (3) vertical and horizontal leadership.

Spendlove (2007, p. 407), in a study of university heads in the UK, argues that: "university leadership is fundamentally different from leadership in other contexts, and demands additional competencies". Bryman (2007, p. 706), in reviewing the literature, concluded that: "the findings reported in this article strongly imply that leadership *does* make a difference so far as academic effectiveness is concerned". Gosling et al. (2009) argue that while the factors influencing the progress of higher education have become more diverse and distributed, this does not mean leadership will become more dissipated and dispersed. They go on to cite evidence from recent research in higher education that individual leaders in the most senior positions are a crucial ingredient. Basham (2012a) argues that, in the case of higher education, the distinction between transactional and transformational leadership may not be that clear. On the other hand, De Boer and Goedegebuure (2010)

present data which indicate that academics are rather sceptical about university leadership and management and conclude that: "this is worrisome because these negative views of the university's most valuable asset – their academics – are likely to have a negative impact on leadership effectiveness" (p. 356).

Bryman (2007) posits that the academic environment poses unique challenges for traditional concepts and theories of leadership:

> Leadership, in the traditional sense associated with leadership theory and research, may be of limited relevance, because academics' professionalism and their internal motivation mitigate the need for leadership of this kind. … In academic contexts, leadership may sometimes be as significant (if not more significant) for the damage it causes as for the benefits it brings in its wake. (p. 707).

Badillo-Vega, Krücken and Pineda (2019) undertook a comprehensive bibliographical review of leadership research on university presidents from 111 journal articles published between 1969 and 2018. They found that most articles used a qualitative approach, frequently interviews, while the use of quantitative methods and mixed-designs was much less common. They found that the largest number of studies on presidential leadership focused on the individual characteristics of presidents combined with organisational characteristics. Around a quarter of the studies focused on personal characteristics of university presidents. The third most common type of study involved joint analysis of individual characteristics, organisational features and the external social environment, followed by studies involving the analysis of organisational features. The joint study of personal and societal characteristics and the study of organisational features and society were the least common focus of research studies.

Badillo-Vega, Krücken and Pineda (2019) describe the articles focused on individual characteristics as addressing issues such as: socio-demographic characteristics; educational background; the relationship between competencies with behaviours; gender differences; career paths; academic reputation; educational trajectories; mentoring/peer-network relationships; diversity; leadership style; and communication skills. Studies at the organisational level focus on the strategies that presidents choose according to the

characteristics of the organisation or the organisational model. Other studies focus on the study of the societal context in which the university operates, while others approach different levels of analysis simultaneously.

Esen, Bellibas and Gumus (2020, p. 266) undertook a bibliometric and content analysis of articles published in five prominent higher education journals in order to reveal the evolving trends in research on leadership in higher education. In relation to topical focus, leadership models/types featured most prominently (25) followed by institutional leadership (university and college leaders) (23) and academic leadership (deans and department chairs) (16). There were fewer publications relating to student leadership (8), women leadership/gender (6) and leadership development (6). Other topics covered included leadership in general and leadership effectiveness. The purposes of these studies, in order of frequency were:

> Association between leadership and other concepts (26)
> Identifying leadership roles/practices/strategies (22)
> Factors affecting leadership behaviors/capacity (16)
> Conceptualization (6)
> Others (demographics of leaders, evaluation of leadership, perceptions about leadership etc.) (14)

Esen, Bellibas and Gumus (2020) also showed that almost half of the related articles were by authors based in the US, followed by Australia and the UK. They further conclude that the results of their analyses of research on leadership in higher education indicate that this research field is still in its infancy.

This section introduced leadership literature in the field of higher education, highlighting both its distinctiveness and the focus of study. It also served to highlight the fact that the volume of literature on presidential leadership is relatively small. This overview of higher education leadership research is followed below by a more focused review of research into leadership styles and approaches in the higher education domain.

3.4 Leadership Practice in Higher Education

The seminal work of Burns (1978) characterised leader behaviour as either transactional or transformational. Transactional approaches to leadership are based on motivating people to perform in exchange for specific rewards. However, commitment from faculty may fall when leadership lacks the resources for the exchange. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, seeks to motivate staff to excel beyond expectations through the use of individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, and charisma (Randall and Coakley, 2007).

Peterson (2018) argues that transactional leadership styles are associated with masculine traits, while the transformational leadership style incorporates more feminine traits and qualities. Based on an analysis of job advertisements used in the recruitment of vice-chancellors in Swedish HEIs over three decades, she identified that masculine leadership ideals appeared more than feminine leadership ideals and that the total number of codes was significantly higher for the masculine leadership ideal. The most frequently used masculine worded leadership themes were: goal-oriented/results-driven; strong/tough/forceful; natural leader; decisive/focused/determined/driven; distinctive/direct/straightforward; and courageous/bold/brave. The most frequently used feminine worded leadership themes were: cooperative/collaborative; communicative; socially responsible; good listener; trustworthy/trust relations; and, committed. Significantly, she identified a shift taking place towards a more communicative and collaborative leadership ideal over that time period. This shift represents a move towards a more feminine, transformational leadership ideal as a counterweight to the traditional masculine-biased leadership ideal.

Rayner (2008) charts the evolution of leadership thought in the field of education (see Table 3.2 below). Many of the key concepts raised therein are addressed throughout the remainder of this chapter. He asserts that transformational leadership is associated with almost "mythic qualities" (p. 40) but these qualities belie a kind of managerialism, with its focus on standards-driven performance, which has been at the heart of the establishment model of educational policy. Inclusive leadership, on the other hand, is concerned with

educational theory, professional knowledge and the growth of *praxis*. Drawing on classical philosophy, Rayner (2008) describes inclusive leadership in Aristotelian terms:

> It refers to how the idea (*eidos*) shapes the learner's action (*phronesis*) to produce practical wisdom (*telos*). The formation and product of this synthesis of professional learning and knowledge is *praxis*. (p. 44)

Table 3.2: Developing Leadership: A Pragmatic Synthesis

Transformational leadership	Post-transformational leadership	Inclusive leadership
Hierarchical and individual in marking out a leader as a separate and different to the subordinate community.	Democratic and/or common property or process tied to function.	Leaders and followers become interchangeable as knowledge management is developed.
Leadership is different from and more important than management.	Leadership is a social function seeking a common good.	Leadership may be understood as reciprocal, purposeful learning in a community.
An office or title of appointment and/or authority.	A complex mutual process of influence.	Seeks connectivity and consistency within the community in order to achieve synergy.
A personal quality that is exercised when the led follow a leader.	A social property that can occur in anyone and anywhere at any time.	Everyone has the right, responsibility and potential/capability to be a leader.
Leaders are a key factor in organisational effectiveness and performance.	Leadership is one of many factors in organisations effectiveness/performance reflecting dynamic systems and uncertainty.	*Praxis* produces an empowering and transformative leadership inferring creativity, contribution/adaptation.
A leader gives orders and subordinates follow this lead as a duty.	A leader facilitates growth and participation in an event/activity.	How we define leadership in the local context frames how people will participate.
Effective leadership is global, generalisable/transferable across context and boundary.	Effective leadership is local and contextual.	Effective leadership combines *eidos* and *phronesis* to produce *telos* (as an interplay between agency and structure).

Source: Rayner (2008), p. 44

Rayner (2008) argues that transformational leadership theories view leaders as a key factor in organisational effectiveness and performance while post-transformational leadership theories view leadership as one of many factors in organisations effectiveness, reflecting dynamic systems and uncertainty. On the other hand, Taylor and de Lourdes Machado (2006) suggest that in higher education, transformational, culture-redefining change is not always what should be pursued as most change is appropriately incremental, not transformational. Bryman and Lilley (2009), in their study of leadership researchers, reported a virtual absence of any reference to transformational or charismatic leadership among the factors identified as contributing to leadership effectiveness. Yet, leadership research is dominated by leader-centric views of leadership:

> Most leadership theories start with the assumption leadership is wedded to the traits and behaviours of the individual, in other words a leader-centric view of leadership. Coupled to this, and sometimes uncritically acknowledged, is the reliance on this assumption as the means to deliver and uphold reform. (Youngs 2017, p. 146)

In a separate study, Rayner et al. (2010) categorise leadership approaches based on a review of published literature from 1990-2009, although the focus is primarily on the professoriate in UK universities. They posit that most empirical work on the nature of leadership in UK universities is focused on the middle leader in an individual institution, explained in terms of a model and exercise of leadership as one or more of the following: (1) collegiate leadership; (2) transactional leadership; (3) transformational leadership; (4) collective leadership; (5) managerialist leadership; (6) remote or distant leadership; (7) hybrid management.

Van Ameijde et al. (2009) report that a number of studies have provided empirical support for the concept of distributed leadership. Their own small-scale exploratory study identified factors which were found to enhance and inhibit its occurrence and effectiveness. They identify two principles as underpinning the concept of distributed leadership:

1. Leadership is a shared influence process to which several individuals contribute
2. Leadership arises from the interactions of diverse individuals which together form a group or network in which essential expertise is a dispersed quality. (p. 766)

Gosling et al. (2009) describe distributed leadership as being: "constructed from the widespread distribution of agency throughout complex organizations" (p. 299) and suggest that it has been prominent in research into education management for some time. They hypothesise four potential functions for distributed leadership: descriptive; corrective; empowering; and, rhetorical. However, they found limited evidence that distributed leadership accurately describes the reality of leadership in higher education. It may have a corrective function as an analytical framework which draws attention to the variety of constituents of leadership. It may also have an empowering function, largely operating through its narrative function. They conclude that: "the ways in which we talk about leadership are both constructed by and help to construct our understandings and enactment of leadership" (p. 308). Kezar, Dizon and Scott (2020) stress the central role of senior leadership teams in facilitating change in higher education, while highlighting the absence of research in this area.

Gosling et al. (2009) suggest that distributed leadership is an effective term in higher education because it embraces notions of collegiality and autonomy while addressing the need for management. The notion of collegiality is itself a contested one and Kligyte and Barrie (2014) utilise psychoanalytic theory to unpack aspects of academic cultures relating to notions of collegiality to offer insights into conceptualisation of academic leadership. Using Lacanian philosophy to explore academic cultures and leadership, they position collegiality as a subliminal nostalgic fantasy of the collegial past and explore the counterintuitive ways that this might be playing out in academics' resistance to managerial practices:

> We have shown how the tendency to simplify the notion of collegiality might be working against the very intentions of academics yearning for more collegial leadership practices and attitudes in higher education. (p. 167)

Jones and Harvey (2017) argue, in the context of Australian higher education, that traditional heroic leadership approaches may no longer achieve what is needed to achieve the best outcomes for learning, teaching, research and communities. They assert that the distributed leadership approach has motivated researchers to: "develop empirically

informed resources to support the enactment of DL [distributed leadership] across the academy" (p. 136). However, while they found that university departments and faculties had adopted a distributed leadership approach, they concluded that there was no evidence of systemic sector-wide adoption. In a similar vein, Macfarlane (2014) contends that:

> Distributed leadership has now become a mainstream, and even perhaps dominant, mode of analysis … It is no longer an alternative or marginalized way of understanding leadership in higher education. (p. 1) … Whether this will translate into more distributed and inclusive leadership *practices* in our universities is yet to be seen. (p. 3)

Sewerin and Holmberg (2017), in a study of distributed leadership involving focus groups with younger researchers, identified four arenas for undertaking leadership in universities. They stressed the importance of making explicit the tensions between multiple, often contradictory perspectives. They referred to the four arenas as "rooms of leading": managing the formal organisation; advancing your own independent field of science; teaching and forming new educational avenues; and, negotiating cross-scientific environments (pp. 1285-86).

Contrary to the view held in the broader literature, Bolden et al. (2008) conclude that heroic and distributed leadership are not necessarily in opposition to each other. They also found that while the rhetoric was often very positive about distributed leadership, the reality was that distributed leadership often relied on delegated power from above. Jones et al. (2014) conclude that:

> Rather than replacing the traditional focus on individual leaders, distributed leadership links individual leaders and experts in collaborative activities. (p. 614)

Gronn (2009) posits that notions of distributed leadership have gained prominence in educational circles, in large part due to dissatisfaction with the hero paradigm associated with transformational leadership. He argues that distributed leadership is only a partial lens on leadership:

Notwithstanding the contribution made by studies of distributed leadership in advancing situated knowledge, a distributed picture provides part of the picture of practice but by no means the entirety of it. … I show that, despite their reaction to individualist approaches to leadership, solo leaders continue to figure prominently in accounts that purport to be distributed and that distributed leadership apologists have not adequately clarified the role and contribution of individuals as continuing sources of organizational influence within a distributed framework. (p. 383)

Gronn (2009) highlights the need to revisit distributed leadership as the preferred unit of analysis and instead proposes the notion of hybrid leadership configurations. Responding to this call, Bolden and Petrov (2014) used two case studies to argue that traditional approaches which focus on the leader's characteristics and behaviours are clearly inadequate predictors of effective leadership, while simplistic descriptions of distributed leadership are also inadequate. The argue that: "it is the *interaction* between these forms and manifestations of leadership that produce the observed effects rather than any of them in isolation" (p. 414).

Davis (2014) proposed the concept of "leadingful leadership literacy" (p. 371), representing a shift to a post-heroic perspective on leadership studies theory and one which explains the social complexities of leadership. Collinson and Collinson (2009) found a pattern of hybridity which they referred to as blended leadership in their study of seven English further education colleges:

While respondents preferred a consultative leadership style, they also valued leaders who were clear and decisive. They articulated a consistent preference for what we term 'blended leadership', a view that emphasizes the inter-relatedness of leadership behaviours often assumed to be incompatible dichotomies. (p. 369)

Jones, Harvey and Lefoe (2014) developed a conceptual model of blended leadership to facilitate greater collaboration between academics and professional staff:

The conceptual framework for blended leadership … is premised on the notion of administrative management operating in the professional space, intellectual leadership

operating in the academic space and an agreed mix of both these approaches operating within the overlap (third space). (p. 419)

Corrigan (2013) questions whether distributed leadership will have an enduring impact in educational administration research and practice and concludes that the literature on distributed leadership is conflicted. Youngs (2017) argues for moving beyond distributed leadership, which is often claimed to be the means to overcome the dualism of professional and academic staff in higher education:

> Building on and moving beyond distributed leadership to engage with the leadership-as-practice movement may offer an alternative to seemingly always getting stuck in the dualistic notions of collegiality and managerialism. (p. 150)

In this section, higher education leadership approaches were investigated. The evolution of thinking from transactional to transformational, distributed and blended leadership was explored. The following section builds on this, and examines the literature on leadership effectiveness in higher education.

3.5 Leadership Effectiveness in Higher Education

Spendlove (2007) suggests that research in leadership development has moved towards a competencies approach, based on identifying the leadership competencies of individuals. Bryman and Lilley (2009, pp. 337-338) on the other hand highlight the concerns raised by leadership researchers about the development of competency frameworks:

> However, among the leadership researchers who were interviewed there was considerable scepticism about the prospects for developing prescriptive inventories of what makes for leadership effectiveness in higher education. The most common reason for this doubt was that for many of the researchers, leadership effectiveness is profoundly influenced by the context within which leaders find themselves.

According to Hamlin and Patel (2017), studies tend to investigate what leaders do rather than exploring the relationship between behavioural performance and effectiveness. They

argue that few of the empirical studies have actually identified behavioural indicators which differentiate between effective and ineffective leadership. Randall and Coakley (2007) suggest that adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al. (2004)) is a more useful approach, based on the premise that leadership is more of a process rather than individual personal capabilities.

A number of studies have looked at leadership effectiveness in higher education. Goodall (2009) offers evidence that one leader characteristic – the level of scholarly expertise of the president – has an impact on the university's later performance. Based on interviews with 26 university heads in the US and UK, she reported that scholars are seen as more credible as leaders, have expert knowledge about the core business of universities, are standard bearers who set the quality threshold and send a signal to the faculty and others that the leader shares their scholarly values. Separately, an analysis of a panel of 55 research universities appears to show that leaders who are better scholars may be able to help improve the research performance of their universities. It should be noted, however, that the quantitative research presented is based on a relatively small data set of 55 'old' (pre-1992) UK universities and spans just nine years. The dependent variable, university performance, is based on the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), while the independent variable is the presidents' lifetime citations. By the author's own admission, the paper's evidence should be treated with caution, while conceding that other factors such as age, size, wealth and reputation are all contributing factors to the long term success of any university. Oleksiyenko and Ruan (2019) argue that further research is necessary to explore the barriers to the development of intellectual leadership and how different levels of intellectual leadership emerge under circumstances of disadvantage.

Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2010) argue that the existence of this relationship raises the issue of causation: Are leaders chosen because their characteristics match the profile of the university? Or is the profile of the university significantly determined by the characteristics of the leader? They argue that the difficulty in answering these questions is compounded by the homogeneity in the socio-demographic characteristics of university leaders. In a study of 147 leaders from both 'pre-92' and 'post-92' universities in the UK (excluding Scotland), they found that:

Whilst the performance of a university may be "moulded" by the characteristics of its leader, most of the variability in university performance is explained by non-leadership factors' (p. 503).

Specifically, they found limited evidence for the relationship between several socio-demographic characteristics and several objective measures of university performance. Spendlove (2007) found that academic credibility, experience of university life and people skills were crucial for effective leadership of Pro-Vice Chancellors (PVCs) in UK universities:

The most common attributes cited for effective university leadership were openness; honesty; the need to consult others; the ability to listen, negotiate and persuade; the ability to think broadly/strategically; and to engage with people. … However, some of the attributes that our respondents felt were particularly important for the role of PVC were very different to those required in business, and are not included in existing competency models. These were: academic credibility; "being seen and respected as an academic"; experience as a head of department; willingness to be wrong/accept advice/support; discretion; "fellow feeling"; not remote, visible/ "get into departments"; "outgoing, get around the place". (p. 411-412)

In a larger-scale and more wide-ranging study, Scott et al. (2008) found that academic leadership roles are multi-dimensional and require a broad range of capabilities. They undertook a major survey of over 500 people in leadership roles in 20 Australian universities. The leaders surveyed held the positions of dean, pro vice-chancellor, deputy vice-chancellor and head of school. Self-reports on the capabilities that are perceived as most important for effective performance showed significant similarities, particularly among the senior academic management roles. Managing relationships with senior staff, strategic planning, identifying new opportunities and managing other staff were identified by both deans and pro vice-chancellors as their top four most important work areas.

Based on a review of the literature, Bryman (2007, p. 706) concludes that: "the findings reported in this article strongly imply that leadership *does* make a difference so far as academic effectiveness is concerned", though there is surprisingly little empirical research

addressing the question of makes for leadership effectiveness in higher education. Bryman and Lilley (2009) highlight the current gap in the research:

> Although leadership researchers have focused on what makes for effective leadership, the issue of leadership effectiveness in universities has not attracted a great deal of attention from them. (p. 332)

Thompson and Miller (2018) identified four higher education leadership skills to deal with disruptive changes in higher education in the nursing domain: leadership agility; interprofessional leadership; civility and inclusiveness; and strategic communication. Dunbar (2016) identified leader disposition expectations held by senior university staff; these personal leader qualities were in the main person-related:

> Successful leadership would appear to involve open communication and genuine engagement, personal openness/honesty and humanity. Also important are being able to listen well, being considerate of others and showing benevolence, having integrity, accepting of constructive criticism and humble enough to admit mistakes, seeing progress and success as a team effort. (p. 134)

Adopting a novel approach to researching the types of leadership associated with effectiveness, Bryman and Lilley (2009) interviewed a purposive sample of 24 leadership researchers in the UK. While they identified several forms of leadership as likely to be effective and ineffective, no single type of leadership stood out. Bryman and Lilley's (2009) study, which focused on departmental leadership, highlighted trust and personal integrity as the only factor identified by any significant number of respondents. The other leader behaviours to emerge were: supportive of his/her staff; consultation; unambiguous values; a sense of direction; and, protect their staff. Most of these leader behaviours mirror those identified in the literature review of Bryman (2007) and the study conducted by Gibbs et al. (2008) and indeed appear on many lists of leadership competencies. However, one aspect of leader behaviour in higher education that was seen as significant was that effective leaders protect their staff:

> This could mean that protecting staff is singled out as something that is perceived to
> contribute more specifically to leadership effectiveness in a higher education context
> perhaps in reflection, in the UK context at least, of a perception of academics being on the
> receiving end of a seemingly ceaseless set of initiatives. (Bryman and Lilley 2009, pp. 335-
> 336)

Interestingly, the issue of treating academic staff fairly and with integrity did not come through in a similar French study (Hamlin and Patel 2017). Bryman and Lilley (2009) found that the factors associated with ineffectiveness in higher education were largely, though not entirely, the inverse of the effectiveness factors. The key factors identified in this respect were: lack of trust or integrity; a failure to be consultative; and, ignoring problems.

This section included a review of a number of important studies which reported on the leadership competencies associated with leadership effectiveness. However, as argued by Bryman and Lilley (2009), there are profound reservations among leadership researchers about the application of context-free competency-based leadership effectiveness frameworks in higher education. It is for that reason that a detailed context is provided in chapter 2 of this thesis. Having reviewed the literature on leadership styles and leadership effectiveness in the sections above, what follows is a review of the importance of contextual factors. Assessing the impact of contextual factors on higher education leadership forms a significant part of this research study.

3.6 Contextual Influences on Higher Education Leadership

The research approach in this thesis is closely aligned with the situational leadership approach and draws heavily on the importance of contextual factors in higher education leadership. The basis for contextual leadership is that there are common situations or contexts that allow us to anticipate leadership behaviours. Bryman (2007) argues that leader behaviour that works in one context may not work in another. Gibbs et al. (2008) highlight the importance of taking account of contextual factors in the study of leadership in higher education. Different contexts relate, for example, to department size, national higher

education context, organisational culture, change in teaching, the experience of teaching problems, discipline and whether the HEI is teaching-intensive or research-intensive. Gibbs et al. (2008) describe how context-dependent successful leadership is within education. They caution against offering general advice in any specific context in the absence of a full appreciation and knowledge of that context.

Badillo-Vega, Krücken and Pineda (2019) highlighted this issue specifically in respect of research on presidential leadership:

> What we did encounter in line with our preliminary expectations was that the analysis of the societal context in relation to other analytical levels in which the universities are embedded is increasingly present but remains as a desideratum in the literature on the leadership of university presidents. (p. 9)

Osborn et al. (2002) propose a contextual theory of leadership comprising four relevant contexts for leadership in and of organisations:

1. Stability: conditions between and among such macro variables as external environment, structure, size, and technology assume static fit. Leadership mechanically adjusts to and creates internal operations to enhance system goals for various fits. Steady trajectory of operations and goals for predictable conditions.
2. Crisis: dramatic departure from prior practice and sudden threats to high priority goals with little or no response time.
3. Dynamic equilibrium: organizations in change mode often attributable to competition, technology, internal initiatives, or institutional evolution. Stability within a range of shifting priorities with programmatic change efforts.
4. Edge of chaos: transition zone delicately poised between order and chaos that many complex adaptive systems seem to naturally evolve toward. (p. 800)

Bryman and Lilley (2009) report that higher education is itself a distinctive context and as a result many of the leadership approaches from other sectors cannot be transplanted into the sphere of higher education. In their study of leadership researchers, a unique dimension associated with higher education was the difficulty in dealing with poor performance. The metaphor of herding cats was used to describe the challenge of leading academics, a

difficulty potentially explained by the individualistic work patterns of academics and the fact that the loyalties of academics are to their disciplines more often than to their institutions.

Similarly, in the context of secondary schools, Currie, Lockett and Suhomlinova (2009) found that no one approach to leadership appears to be related to superior organisational performance. Based on a sample of 200 schools in England they concluded that the new results-oriented leadership approach was not superior to the more traditional professional value-based leadership approach in performance terms. Rather, it is contextual factors, such as levels of social deprivation and the financial resources of the school, which appear to impact on performance. They also suggest that leadership styles are shaped not only by the leaders' personal characteristics but also by the institutional environment.

Badillo-Vega, Krücken and Pineda (2019) highlight the opportunity for further research in this area:

> The explanation about changes of context in terms of pressures to become more entrepreneurial and efficient and evaluation activities of teaching and research deserve to be explained in connection with the role of presidents in the complex contexts of higher education.

In this section, the importance of contextual factors for higher education leadership was highlighted, consistent with the notion of situational leadership. Boyer (1990) framed academic work into four functions: the scholarships of discovery (research), integration, application and teaching. In a similar vein, Ireland's National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (Department of Education and Skills (2011)) describes the three core roles of higher education in Ireland as: teaching and learning; research; and, engagement with wider society. One might expect leadership in higher education to have different manifestations for these domains, and as a result, concepts of situational leadership form an important part of the research questions in this thesis. The final section of this chapter draws together the diverse strands within the higher education leadership literature to present a conceptual framework to underpin the thesis.

3.7 Conceptual Framework

This section attempts to synthesise the important themes to emerge from the literature into a conceptual framework which captures the key elements that will underpin the research approach adopted within the thesis and the conduct of the analysis. As highlighted by Badillo-Vega, Krücken and Pineda (2019), the amount of research on presidential leadership is relatively small, and there is therefore a deficit in the corpus of knowledge in this area; this study makes some contribution to addressing that gap. Significantly, this study proposes an integrative approach to the study of leadership as advocated by Yukl (2010) and Avolio (2007). The conceptual framework, as set out in Figure 3.1 below, incorporates trait, behavioural and situational approaches to the study of leadership.

Figure 3.1: Conceptual Framework – An Integrative Approach to Presidential Leadership

Presidential leadership, positioned at the centre of the diagram, is conceived of as comprising leadership profile and leadership approaches. In the research undertaken among presidents in this study, detailed probing into the profile of leaders is undertaken. In addition, presidents' self-perceptions of their leadership styles and approaches (traits) are explored. As illustrated in Figure 3.1, leadership has both internal manifestations within the

organisation and external manifestations outside of the HEI (behaviours). This duality of internal versus external leadership behaviours forms an important component of this research study. The influence of both individual and contextual (situational) factors on presidential leadership form the final elements of the framework.

It is important to note that while notions of leadership effectiveness are addressed in this chapter, leadership effectiveness is not the focus of this thesis, and in a similar vein followership theory is not explicitly addressed in this research in any meaningful way. While these are substantive research domains in their own right, they are beyond the scope of this study.

The integrative nature of this framework is perhaps the most significant contribution of this study, as most current theories have inadequate explanatory processes and fail to sufficiently address situational processes or context (Yukl 2010). This research applies models from the broader leadership literature to the specific context of higher education and in so doing will make a contribution to the existing body of knowledge on leadership in higher education. The conceptual framework set out here forms the basis for the research approach adopted in this study (Chapter 4) and is further developed into an integrative model of higher education leadership in Chapter 6.

3.8 Summary

This chapter presented a review of the key literature published in the field of leadership research, focusing in particular on higher education leadership. It highlighted the important contributions as well as some of the gaps in the field. Research into leadership effectiveness and higher education leadership styles and approaches were considered in more detail as well as the contextual factors impacting on higher education leadership in different domains. In the preceding section, these important themes were drawn together to form a conceptual framework underpinning the thesis. This conceptual framework, and the literature behind it, was critical in helping frame research questions and the research methodology as articulated in Chapter 4 and the approach to analysis in Chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This study is focused on presidents in institutes of technology in Ireland. It involved conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with the presidents of each of the 14 institutes of technology. The focus of the research, and of all of the research questions, is on the overall leader of the organisation, the president. It does not claim to address leadership of other senior leaders within the organisation, nor does is it designed to deal with follower perspectives in any significant way.

This chapter addresses the methodology (the theory of getting knowledge) and methods (the research techniques used to collect and analyse data) used in this study (Sikes 2004). The first half of this chapter outlines the methodology of the study, including the researcher's ontology, epistemology and positionality. This is followed by an articulation of the three main research questions being addressed. The second half of the chapter concerns itself with the research methods employed, including data collection methods and sampling. This is followed by an overview of the ethical issues involved in this study and issues associated with insider research and elite interviewing. Finally, the approach to data analysis, which is reported in subsequent chapters, is articulated.

4.2 Ontology, Epistemology and Positionality

The seminal work of Burrell and Morgan (1979) examines some of the philosophical assumptions which underwrite different approaches to social science and conceptualise these as four sets of assumptions. Firstly, there are assumptions of an ontological nature, namely those which relate to the very essence of the phenomenon under investigation. Sikes (2004) argues that ontological assumptions about social reality focus on whether a person sees social reality as external, independent, given and objectively real, or as socially constructed, subjectively experienced and the result of human thought. If the social world is seen as given and independent then it can be quantified in some kind of objective way. On the other hand, a social constructivist position involves subjective accounts that explain how the world is experienced.

Secondly, Burrell and Morgan (1979) identify epistemological assumptions, those relating to the grounds of knowledge, how one understands the world and communicates this as knowledge to others. Sikes (2004) describes epistemology as the theory of knowledge and suggests that epistemological assumptions concern the nature of knowledge, what constitutes knowledge and what it is possible to know and understand and re-present. Therefore, it is not possible to engage in research and not consider epistemology. Thirdly, Burrell and Morgan (1979) describe assumptions relating to human nature and the relationship between people and their environment. Finally, they argue, the preceding set of assumptions have direct implications of a methodological nature.

Researchers tend to adopt either positivist or interpretivist approaches to undertaking research and Greenbank (2003) argues that when researchers are deciding on what research methods to adopt in educational research they will be influenced by their underlying ontological and epistemological position. Furthermore, he concluded that: "the complex interaction of the researcher's moral, competency, personal and social values have an important influence on the research process" (p. 798). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) suggest that the positivist tradition is based on an ontology and epistemology of a single independently existing reality which can only be directly experienced and verified between independent observers through empirical testing using inductive and deductive hypotheses. In contrast, the interpretivist tradition emphasises the relationship between socially engendered concept formation and language.

This researcher's ontological position is based on a belief that reality is subjective, coming from a social constructivist perspective, which Sikes (2004) explains as allowing: "subjective accounts and perceptions that explain how the world is experienced and constructed by the people who live in it" (p. 20). This is underpinned by an epistemological position which leans towards interpretivism; the approach taken in this research is therefore qualitative in nature, a holistic approach which is grounded in a specific leadership setting and is therefore concerned with learning from this particular context.

Consistent with the researcher's philosophical assumptions, this approach is not based on setting *a priori* hypotheses, rather an inductive approach which results in contextually rich research findings. Braun and Clarke (2006) distinguish between inductive and theoretical approaches to research analysis. The approach in this study is more inductive in nature and based on a phenomenological position. While the overarching research questions, as outlined in the section 4.4 below, were determined in advance, the more specific subsidiary research questions evolved through the process of data analysis.

4.3 Methodological Approach

The proposed methodology in this study is interpretative in nature. It moves away from the reliance on surveys and makes greater use of qualitative methods as suggested by Yukl (2010), who points to methodological shortcomings in much of the existing leadership research, with a strong emphasis on surveys and convenience samples. He argues for greater use of qualitative methods, multiple methods and multilevel analysis. In this study, a full sample is taken, and semi-structured depth interviews are undertaken will all of the presidents in the technological higher education sector.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define such qualitative research as: "situated activity that locates the observer in the world". Inman (2014) argues that a qualitative approach to studying leadership is justified because leadership is highly context specific. The interpretivist approach argues that: "the researcher is not observing phenomena from outside the system, but is inextricably bound into the human situation which he/she is studying" (Walliman (2001) p. 167). Indeed, in this study the researcher is part of the very system which is the subject of the study. This does, however, raise issues of insider research which are addressed later in this chapter.

Badillo-Vega, Krücken and Pineda (2019), in a systematic review of 111 empirical studies on presidential leadership published between 1969 and 2018, concluded that most of the studies are qualitative in nature and that the research methodologies used reflect a predominance of interpretative over positivistic paradigms. Of the 111 articles reviewed, 75

used qualitative research methods, compared to 26 which used a quantitative research design and 10 which used mixed methods. A bibliometric and content analysis by Esen, Bellibas and Gumus (2020) also found a dominance of qualitative methods in the publications studied: 39 publications used qualitative methods, compared to 24 quantitative and just two mixed method (the remainder were theoretical or literature review). The approach taken in this study is therefore consistent with both the ontological and epistemological position of this researcher and also the dominant paradigm within the literature on presidential leadership.

4.4 Research Questions

The research questions have evolved over the course of this study, influenced in the early stages by the literature and laterally when designing the research instrument and analysing the data. Initially the study was framed to consider how leadership is expressed among presidents in institutes of technology and to identify the different manifestations of leadership in different domains. Based on a review of the higher education leadership, a new conceptual framework was developed (Section 3.7 of Chapter 3). This conceptual framework expanded and reshaped the original direction of the research into a more integrative approach to presidential leadership, and ultimately moulded the final research questions.

The research questions were developed and refined into three overarching research questions. These research questions are presented below:

Research question one: What is the profile of leaders in the technological higher education sector in Ireland and how do the professional characteristics of presidents impact on leadership?

This question involves an examination of the profile of leaders in the technological higher education sector in Ireland at a time of significant change in the run up to the establishment of technological universities and an investigation of how the professional characteristics of

presidents impact on leadership. Sociodemographic profiles are considered in terms of: tenure of president; disciplinary background; gender; scholarship; and, career history.

Research question two: What are presidents' approaches to leadership within and beyond the organisation?

Within the institution, this involves a detailed exploration of: role definition; organisational structures and culture; communications; and, leadership of internal change projects. The conduct of leadership beyond the organisation entails an investigation of: the internal versus external focus of leadership; the scope of external leadership; collective leadership; and, leadership of external collaborations.

Research question three: How are leadership practices influenced by contextual factors?

This question involves an exploration of potential contextual factors including: leadership in different higher education domains (teaching and learning; research; and, engagement); changing national policy priorities; and, higher education landscape reconfiguration.

These research questions represent an integrative approach that considers more than one type of leadership variable as advocated by Yukl (2010) and Avolio (2007). This study integrates trait (research question 1); behavioural (research question 2) and situational (research question 3) approaches to the study of leadership.

These research questions were informed by a review of the Irish higher education context as set out in Chapter 2 and, in particular, by the higher education leadership literature in Chapter 3, culminating in the conceptual framework proposed in Section 3.7. These research questions formed the basis for the interview schedule (Appendix 8) which was used to guide the semi-structured interviews with respondents. The final shape of the research questions was in turn influenced by the development of the interview schedule and the analysis of the data. A summary mapping of the interview schedule to selected research literature is presented in section 4.5 below.

4.5 Data Collection

Face to face in-depth interviews were undertaken with all 14 presidents of the institutes of technology in Ireland. The fieldwork took place over a five month period between 2 April and 4 September 2015. These dates were deliberately chosen to avoid the busiest period of the academic year, where availability of both interviewer and interviewees would have been more limited. An email request was sent to each president (Appendix 6) requesting the interview, followed by a confirmation phone call.

In-depth interviews were the most appropriate data collection method, given the kind of detailed information that this research sought to elicit. The research is based on contact with players in the field who can give privileged information related to their experiences and potentially sensitive issues; recognising that presidents are political beings, I had to be very mindful of this when interviewing them. The use of interviews for research is capable of being justified based on the value of the process of interviewing as articulated by Denscombe (2003):

> First, it provides the possibility of exploring matters *in depth*. … Second, interviews allow the interviewee to raise issues that he or she feels are important. … Third, the interview process gives an opportunity for interviewees to provide an 'account' of their experiences. It is *their* vision, spoken in their own words. … Fourth, interviews allow the researcher the opportunity to *check* that he or she is understanding the interviewee correctly. (p. 103)

In-depth interviews have been used in a number of previous studies of leadership in higher education. Spendlove (2007) used depth interviews as the data collection method in a study of competencies for effective leadership among pro vice chancellors in UK universities. Schilling (2009) used semi-structured interviews in a qualitative study on the meaning of negative leadership. Bryman and Lilley (2009) used semi-structured interviews of leadership researchers in a study of leadership in higher education. Van Ameijde et al. (2009) also used semi-structured interviews in their study of distributed leadership in a

large UK university. In an Irish study, O'Connor (2020) collected data using semi-structured interviews among a purposive sample of 34 people at presidential, vice-presidential and dean/divisional levels. Denscombe (2003) offers a useful outline of the approach taken with semi-structured interviews:

> With semi-structured interviews, the interviewer still has a clear list of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered. However, with the semi-structured interview the interviewer is prepared to be flexible in terms of the order in which the topics are considered, and, perhaps more significantly, to let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised by the researcher. (p. 167)

The semi-structured interview method used in this study followed the approach put forward by Denscombe (2003). While the interviews were structured around a clear list of issues (see Appendix 8 – Interview Schedule), the approach to interviewing was flexible, and open-ended questions allowed the interviewees to speak openly and freely. The research approach was designed to address issues of trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, transferability and authenticity as put forward by Lincoln and Guba (1985). In all cases I undertook pre-interview data collection using an internet search to gather initial factual information on the career, discipline, tenure, and qualifications of the relevant president. This was undertaken in order to make the conduct of the interviews more efficient and to instil confidence and trust in respondents regarding my preparedness for the interview. As advocated by Harvey (2010), I made it clear in advance to prospective respondents who I was, where I was working, what the nature of my research was, how long the interview would take and how the data would be used (see Appendix 6).

Undertaking the fieldwork was the most rewarding aspect of this thesis, but it did involve a very significant investment in terms of time and cost. The 14 interviews were conducted over 13 separate days (two of the interviews were held on the same day) over a five month period. With the exception of one interview, which was conducted in a neutral venue in Dublin, all other interviews were held in the respondent's place of work. Interviewing respondents at their place of work provided: "a 'safe' environment for the respondents and enabled an understanding of their 'professional world'" (Inman, p. 243). This involved me driving some 6,300 kilometres (almost 4,000 miles) to meet with presidents in locations

throughout Ireland. The duration of interviews ranged from one hour and 8 minutes to two hours and 28 minutes. Excluding the longest and shortest interviews, the remaining 12 interviews ranged in duration from 84 to 123 minutes and were all within 20 minutes of the average time of 104 minutes. This is similar to a number of other studies of leadership in higher education, for example: Inman (2014) – one to two hours; O'Connor (2020) – 40 min to 90 min, with the majority being over an hour.

All interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and a second recorder was used as a backup. The total recorded interview time came to 24 hours and 11 minutes. I had some initial concerns that respondents would either be unwilling to allow recording of the interviews or would feel constrained in expressing their opinions in the knowledge that they were being recorded. Soundings taken from a number of prospective respondents indicated a willingness to be recorded and openness in responses, particularly given that the interviews were being conducted by a known and trusted interviewer. In recognition of the potential reluctance of respondents to be entirely open and frank in responses, all interviewees were afforded the opportunity to speak off the record at the end of the formal interview. Reassuringly, there was relatively little additional information provided as a result of this opportunity.

All interview recordings were subsequently transcribed to facilitate data analysis. The transcribing work was undertaken by a specialist transcription service and was completed by the end of September 2015. Final transcripts were proofed by the author for accuracy. The word count on the 14 interview transcripts ranged from 16,105 to 27,198 words per interview, with an average word count of 19,490. This resulted in a data set of 272,853 words from in excess of 24 hours of interviews. A thematic approach to analysis of findings, presented in Chapter 5, helped to manage this complex analytical work.Data collection took the form of interview-based questioning, with detailed probing of respondents on key themes. Most questions were open-ended, allowing respondents to articulate their opinions, perspectives and experiences openly and spontaneously. The interview schedule (Appendix 8) was developed primarily from reviewing the higher education leadership literature. The schedule was further informed by the wider field of leadership theory, a review of the Irish higher education context (Chapter 2) and my own

perspectives on contemporary issues facing leaders in higher education in Ireland. Initial drafts were further refined based on discussions with my research supervisor and feedback from presentations at two EdD conferences at the University of Sheffield. Feedback from faculty and fellow EdD students was useful, on the one hand in critiquing the proposed approach, and on the other hand, in refining elements of the research questions and the interview schedule. There was useful advice, for example, on the challenges and pitfalls of insider research and on gender issues.

The themes, issues and dimensions of leadership which were addressed in the interviews are articulated in full in the interview schedule in Appendix 8 and summarised in Table 4.1 below, in which they are mapped to a selection of the literature from which they were drawn. Some themes are addressed in more than one section, while others are derived from themes deemed to be of interest by myself, rather than emanating explicitly from the literature.

Table 4.1: Mapping of Interview Themes to Selected Literature

Interview Theme	Literature
Section 1: Profile of president	
Gender	Pellegrini and Scandura (2008)
Tenure	
Career history	Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2010); Inman (2014)
Disciplinary background	Ramsden et al. (2007)
Scholarship	Goodall (2009)
Section 2: Leadership role of the president	
Role definition	Currie et al. (2009); Gibbs et al. (2008)
Organisational structures and culture	
Communications	
Role models	Middlehurst (2008); Spendlove (2007);
Leadership attributes	Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2010); de Boer and Goedegeburre (2009); Spendlove (2007); Collinson and Collinson (2009); Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2010)

Interview Theme	Literature
Section 3: Leadership within the organisation	
Organisational structures and culture	
Leadership style	Burns (1978); Burns (2003); Bass (1985); Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2010); Avolio et al. (2009)
Influence of disciplinary background	(as above)
Influence of career history	(as above)
Leadership of internal change projects	
Leadership in different higher education domains	Boyer (1990); DES (2011)
Section 4: Leadership beyond the organisation	
Internal versus external focus	Boyer (1990)
Scope of external leadership	
Collective leadership	Middlehurst et al. (2009)
Leadership identity	Bryman (2007); Avolio et al. (2009)
Leadership style	Middlehurst (2008); Currie et al. (2009); Rayner et al. (2010)
Section 5: Leadership in different domains	
(generally)	Boyer (1990); Middlehurst (2008); Middlehurst et al. (2009); Gibbs et al. (2008); Heifetz *at al.* (2004); Randall and Coakley (2007); Yukl (2010); Bryman (2007)
Changing national policy priorities	Department of Education and Skills (2011);
Higher education landscape reconfiguration	Gibbs et al. (2008)
Leadership of external collaborations	Department of Education and Skills (2011)
Section 6: Other issues	
Leadership capacity	
Tenure	(as above)
Gender	(as above)
Scholarship	(as above)
Leadership identity	

The interview approach was focused on gaining understanding through the use of open-ended questioning and in-depth probing. Open-ended questions allow respondents to engage in wide-ranging discussions and give them latitude to fully articulate their responses; open-ended questions also increase the validity of responses in exploratory research, although it does make coding and analysis more difficult (Aberbach and Rockman 2002). All interviews, with the permission of respondents, were tape recorded, an approach which Denscombe (2003) contends is the standard method of capturing interview data. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006) suggest that recording has the advantages of having a verbatim record of the entire interview and of allowing the researcher to focus on the interviewee, although it may also make respondents anxious and less likely to reveal confidential information. Field notes were also taken during the interviews, particularly to attempt to record observations which are not capable of being captured by the tape recordings.

4.6 Sampling

For the purposes of this study, the population is defined as presidents of institutes of technology in Ireland, from April to September 2015. The sampling frame is the 14 institutes of technology in Ireland, including DIT. The study aimed to be a census of presidents, that is, to interview the current president in each of the institutes of technology. One of the most significant achievements of this research was in fact to secure interviews with all of the target population, and in so doing get a full picture, at a point in time, of presidential leadership in this sector of the Irish higher education system.

The choice of respondents from a real world setting contrasts with the methodological limitations associated with sampling in some leadership studies. Lyons and Schneider (2009), for example, adopted an experimental method using a student sample. Yukl (2010), in a critique of leadership studies, identified that most leadership studies used convenience samples of leaders at supervisor level, while few used systematic selection or studied leaders at executive level; this study addresses both of these shortcomings. Achieving a census meant that issues around the significance of non-respondents did not arise. Non-

response can result in a highly selective sample which does not reflect the population in question (Denzin, 1989).

The sample size (14) in this study not only represents a census of the relevant population but also compares favourably with other studies of leadership in higher education. Gibbs et al. (2008) researched 19 departments in 11 universities. Spendlove (2007) sampled ten pro-vice-chancellors in the UK. Van Ameijde et al. (2009) interviewed five university managers. Goodall's (2009) study of heads of UK and US universities involved interviews with 26 leaders. Inman's (2014) research on middle-level leader-academics within HEIs involved semi-structured biographical interviews with 18 individuals. O'Connor (2020) conducted semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of 34 respondents from seven Irish universities. The Gaus et al. (2020) leadership study involved interviews with seven leaders in two universities.

4.7 Ethics

4.7.1 Ethical approval

In advance of the commencement of this research, formal ethical approval was sought from the School of Education at the University of Sheffield using the 'Research Ethics Application Form'. The research was deemed to be low risk as participants in the study are adults, are able to provide full consent and not deemed vulnerable. However, people in similar positions can suffer reputational damage and are not as invincible as we might present them. The application for ethical approval clarified that initial contact with prospective participants would be by e-mail and telephone call and that following initial contact, participants would be sent an information sheet by e-mail. The information sheet described the nature of the project and consent issues and the final version of this correspondence is included in Appendix 6.

At the point of application for ethical approval, it was envisaged that a consent form was not relevant on the basis that once participants agreed to participate this signified implied consent and negated the need for participants to sign a consent form; the participants are

very senior people and the basis for consent was admission to the interview. It was subsequently decided that a participant consent statement (Appendix 7) would be read out at the start of the interview, including a reaffirmation of consent to the interview being recorded. A formal signed consent form was not used due to the potential adverse impact on the relationship with participants; these were key to ensuring the openness of respondents based on established trust relationships. Although overarching principles of ethical consent are universal, the application of these principles requires contextual knowledge, particularly in terms of broadly culturally appropriate norms of behaviour in any given research context. The procedures to protect participants and assure informed consent had to be flexible and respectful of different cultural traditions, social mores and professional cultures (Nolen and Puten (2007); Holliday (2013); Shamin and Qureshi (2013)).

Measures to ensure confidentiality of personal data were also put in place. During the analysis and write-up stage, data were anonymised and a separate encrypted file kept with the key to the identity of participants. All files were stored digitally using secure password encryption. All files will be deleted five years post submission of the EdD. I will be the sole custodian for the data generated by the project, other than as required for interaction with my research supervisor. In the write-up phase, not only did this mean excluding names, it also involved redacting institution, location and region names, where these could be traced back to a particular individual. It also meant that some contexts, events and examples had to be excluded in whole or in part.

In reflecting on the conduct of this research, I have identified two further ethical issues, namely the notion of insider research and the issues associated with interviewing elites. These are addressed in more detail below.

4.7.2 Insider research

Blaxter et al. (2006) argue that the process of interpretation requires the researcher to recognise, and make explicit, one's own role and position within the research, while at the same time distancing oneself from one's data sources and reviewing these views in the light

of those of others. One potential issue associated with this research relates to the challenges of what is often referred to as 'insider research'. This is particularly the case when interviewing presidents from institutes with whom my own institution is either directly competing, or indeed formally collaborating. There is a possibility that being interviewed by me, a person holding the post of registrar, or being from a particular institution, could impact on the nature of the interview. Could respondents be unwilling to disclose important information? Would respondents feel vulnerable because of their leadership position?

In practice, there was relatively little reticence or caution evident in respondents' openness or willingness to respond to particular questions, with the possible exception of questions relating to other leaders. The level of detail and insights provided to me, the use of casual language and the personal reference to me, my institution, my region and so on, in the course of the interviews by many of the presidents, pointed to a degree of openness, but also of trust. I was also careful to avoid posing questions which would be seen as competitively, commercially or otherwise politically sensitive. For example, in the case of one consortium, involving presidents from two different institutions, their collaboration was subject to a formal review, on which the publication of a report was imminent; in that case I was conscious not to ask overly personal or pointed questions about issues of power or inter-institutional relationships. On the more sensitive topics, such as personal strengths or weakness, or naming of other leaders, I gave respondents an option not to answer. In the case of the former, none did; but for the latter, some did opt not to respond.

According to Bryman and Lilley (2009), the very fact of researchers interviewing leaders within organisations with which they are familiar may actually inhibit more penetrating reflections:

> In other words, reflexivity about one's own organisation and work is limited by familiarity, making it difficult to render the kind of penetrating insight that might be gleaned from a less familiar context. (p. 343)

I tried to adopt the position of what Welch et al. (2002, p. 625) described as: "an informed outsider" – a neutral outsider but with the insight of an insider. The presidents were very generous with their time, on average giving one hour and 44 minutes to the interviews. This

is not insignificant given their seniority and their inevitably busy schedules. As an insider to the sector, I have the advantages of access and a deep understanding of the structures and processes of institutes of technology but a more important advantage was the openness of respondents based on existing relationships and trust.

4.7.3 Interviewing elites

Interviewing institutional leaders raises unique issues compared to interviews with other senior leaders and as suggested by Welch et al (2002), once a decision had been made to engage with elite interviews it is important to be aware up front of the implications for data collection and analysis. While there is no single agreed definition of what constitutes an 'elite', Kezar (2003, p. 395) simply describes them as: "persons in power". Morris (2009, p. 215) describes the literature on how to interview elites as: "small but significant". Amongst other things, this literature points to challenges around power differentials between researchers and participants (Desmond 2004).

The seminal work of Dexter (1970) presented elite interviewing as an important research tool within the social sciences, focused on the specialised knowledge that the interviewee has. On the other hand, Harvey (2010) contends that many of the contributions to the field are focused on particular disciplines; for example the contribution of Richards (1996) on different approaches to researching political elites. Aberbach and Rockman (2002) similarly concentrate on elite interviews relating to political attitudes, values and beliefs.

Mikecz (2012) identifies the main challenges in conducting elite interviews as relating to gaining access and building trust. He highlights the importance of building rapport and trust when interviewing elites and the importance of thorough preparation ("Do your homework!" (p. 487)) in advance of interviews, both in building and establishing rapport, and in reducing any potential power or status imbalance. Welch et al. (2002) summarise the main themes in the elite interviewing literature as relating to: access to elites; power asymmetry; openness of interviewees; and feedback to interviewees. Kezar (2003) argues that many of the characteristics of elite interviews, such as the open-ended format, reflect feminist interviewing values. She puts forward some principles for developing

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transformational elite interviews, including: developing commitment and engagement; creating mutually trusting relationships; building in reflexivity; fostering mutuality; creating an environment of empathy and/or care; manifesting egalitarianism and thinking about power; and, fostering transformation with respect and without judgment.

Smith (2006), on the other hand, argues that the main differences which have been proposed between elite and other types of interview (gaining access, using collaborative approaches, and the use of ethical guidance) are not unique to interviewing elites and goes on to suggest that poststructural theories should frame our understanding of power in the interview process. She highlights the important role of researcher reflexivity in unpacking the complex dynamics between researchers and participants:

> Researchers ought to reflect more carefully on assumptions about where power lies and should consider that the power relations social scientists sometimes employ in relation to society at large do not necessarily translate directly into the interview space. (pp. 651-52)

Desmond (2004) similarly argues for a more reflexive approach to fieldwork in these circumstances, with particular attention being paid to the researcher's positionality. Given my own position as registrar (the chief academic officer) within one of the institutions involved, I had the advantage of inside knowledge of the system; this meant that I was well positioned to identify appropriate questions to ask but also to probe respondents as required. I was also much more also aware of the sensitivities involved in some lines of questioning, particularly those related to technological university alliances. In the conduct of this research, I was acutely aware of the professional stakes involved for the presidents and the potential power imbalance between them and me; this was particularly the case when interviewing the president of my own institution and those from within the TU alliance my institution was involved in. Respondents would also have been aware of my level of knowledge and as a result engagement in the interview was at a much deeper level than would otherwise have been the case. The level of detail in responses provided to me, the evident openness and honesty from respondents and the informal and personal nature of the interaction would all indicate that I had a level of trust that enabled me to go beyond the normal barriers involved in interviewing elites.

4.7.4 Negotiating access

One of the key challenges in undertaking this research was in ensuring access to a significant number of the presidents; a study of leadership among presidents would have been meaningless in the absence of cooperation from most, if not all, of the presidents. Aberbach and Rockman (2002) identify an important problem confronting researchers wishing to interview elites as gaining access. Amongst the strategies used for maximising access was avoiding peak time periods as advocated by Harvey (2010) who suggested that researchers should be aware that at certain times of the year, elite respondents will have a greater volume of work and e-mails than at other times. All of the interviews took place in a five month period between 2 April and 4 September, thereby avoiding the busiest time of the academic year.

As a senior executive manager I was familiar with all of the prospective informants and had met 12 of the 14 in person in a prior professional capacity. In relation to access this was particularly evident in that I was successful in gaining access to a face-to-face interview with every president. The fact that this represents a full sample of all of the presidents within the technological higher education sector, at a critical point of inflection in the developmental trajectory of that sector, underlines the contribution of this study.

4.8 Approach to Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves organising the data around central themes, synthesising data and evaluating, interpreting and problematising the findings. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) articulate the essence of this approach:

> The researcher simultaneously codes and analyses data in order to develop concepts; the researcher refines these concepts, identifies their properties, explores their relationships to one another, and integrates them into a coherent explanatory model. (p. 126).

The approach to analysis in this study (Chapter 5) followed a systematic approach, as recommended by Denscombe (2003, pp. 271-273):

1. Descriptive accounts of the situation;
2. Coding and categorising the data;
3. Reflections on the early coding and categories;
4. Identification of themes and relationships;
5. Return to the field to check out emerging explanations;
6. Develop a set of generalisations;
7. Use the new generalisations to improve any relevant existing theories.

The approach to data analysis in this study is based on the principles of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Nowell et al. (2017, p. 2) argue that: "thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that can be widely used across a range of epistemologies and research questions." This study aims to provide a rich thematic description of the entire data set, rather than a detailed account of one particular theme; this approach, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is particularly relevant when studying an under-researched area, or with participants whose views on the subject matter are not known; both of which apply to this study. Nowell et al. (2017) summarise the main advantages of this approach as including flexibility and accessibility as well as its appropriateness for summarising key features of a large data set.

On the question of inductive versus theoretical thematic analysis, this study is closer to an inductive approach, which meant that the process of coding the data was undertaken without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, while recognising that interview questions were framed in a semi-structured interview guide, informed by the literature on leadership. The approach to analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis is presented and explained below. Over these six phases I moved from participant-led initial descriptive coding to researcher-led final abstraction to themes.

Phase 1: Familiarising oneself with the data

Recordings of all interviews were transcribed and stored on a secure computer drive. Because transcription was undertaken by a third party, the transcripts were checked against the audio recordings for accuracy; this also served to assist with data familiarisation. Nowell et al. (2017) argue that trustworthiness may be established during this phase of analysis by:

> Prolong engagement with data; triangulate different data collection modes; document theoretical and reflective thoughts; document thoughts about potential codes/themes; store raw data in well-organized archives; keep records of all data field notes, transcripts, and reflexive journals. (p. 4)

This stage of prolonged engagement with the data resulted in the generation of an initial set of ideas about themes in the data. This work in reality involved very messy scribbling of notes, words and phrases on blank interview schedules.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Following transcription, data from the 14 in-depth interviews were managed and reduced through a process of inductive reasoning, referred to as coding. This process resulted in both descriptive and explanatory categories (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Nowell et al. (2017) argue that trustworthiness may be established during this phase of analysis by means of:

> Peer debriefing; researcher triangulation; reflexive journaling; use of a coding framework; audit trail of code generation; and documentation of all team meeting and peer debriefings. (p. 4)

The coding framework and categorisation of data involved deconstructing the data from the chronology of the interviews into initial codes. A large number of initial codes were generated at this stage of the process. In this phase of generating initial codes, many of the themes from the interview schedule (Appendix 8) were used.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

The next phase involved grouping related codes into three broad categories: leadership profile; leadership approaches; and, contextual factors, loosely related to the three research questions. Nowell et al. (2017, p. 4) argue that trustworthiness can be enhanced during this phase through: "researcher triangulation; diagramming to make sense of theme connections; and keep detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes". The three categories were used to provide an overall structure (Sections 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4) for the findings chapter (Chapter 5). Categorising all codes under these initial three categories (themes), allowed me to begin to form a framework to further the analysis of the data.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

During this phase, the initial list of potential themes was modified; some of the sub-themes were collapsed into each other; others still were removed. Nowell et al. (2017, p. 4) offer advice on ways of enhancing trustworthiness during this phase of analysis, namely: "researcher triangulation; themes and subthemes vetted by team members; test for referential adequacy by returning to raw data". While in this study the analysis was undertaken by an individual researcher rather than a team, the advice around checking for referential adequacy was relevant. Under the first category (leadership profile), six themes were identified; these six themes formed the basis for the structure of Sections 5.2.2 – 5.2.7 of Chapter 5. Under the second category (leadership approaches), six further themes were identified; findings under each of these themes are reported in Sections 5.3.2 – 5.3.7 of Chapter 5. Under the third category (contextual factors), three themes were identified; findings under each of these themes are reported in Sections 5.4.2 – 5.4.4 of Chapter 5. In addition to these 15 themes, many further sub-themes were pinpointed; these sub-themes are expressed as subheadings (in bold font) under the 15 numbered themes referred to above.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

The most complex phase of analysis involved consolidating these three broad categories, 15 themes and numerous sub-themes from Chapter 5 into a coherent framework. These were synthesised into five overarching categories in Chapter 6, which became the basis for the proposed conceptual model. These five categories were used to give structure to what are quite large and complex themes. The process of defining and naming categories and themes was critical in structuring and undertaking a detailed analysis, as suggested by Nowell et al. (2017). The categories and themes were framed to ensure that they were internally coherent and consistent that there was little overlap between them. The proposed conceptual model includes those five overarching categories: leadership practice; leadership dispositions; leadership approaches; individual factors; and, contextual factors. Beneath these, 20 further themes were identified to give meaning and substance to the broader categories. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Phase 6: Producing the report

The write-up of the findings provides a coherent account of the story the data tell. In Chapter 5, this is presented under the three overarching categories, 15 themes as well as various sub themes. Extracts from interview transcripts were used extensively to make sense of and illustrate the meaning of the data. Where possible, compelling examples and quotations were used to give voice to the presidents and to demonstrate and evidence the themes. The analysis then moved from a descriptive approach (Chapter 5) to an interpretative level (Chapter 6) and relevant leadership literature was used to help contextualise, explain and interpret research findings. This involved exploring relationships across and between themes and cross tabulation with relevant literature. Interpretation also required recognition and explanation of the diverging patterns within the data collected and the acceptance and cherishing of data which do not fit (Blaxter et al. (2006)). In Chapter 6, five new overarching categories are proposed and 20 themes are recognised within these. Based on the thematic analysis of these findings, and these overarching categories and themes, an integrative model of higher education leadership is proposed.

This section set out the various stages involved in data analysis and interpretation based on the Braun and Clarke (2006) principles of thematic analysis. The following chapter (Chapter 5) presents the outcome of this process in the form of findings, followed by analysis and synthesis of those findings presented in a thematically organised fashion in Chapter 6.

4.9 Summary

This chapter is structured into two main parts. The first part of the chapter (Sections 4.1 – 4.4) set out the methodology of the study, including the researcher's ontology, epistemology and positionality. This is followed by a statement of the three key research questions and the detailed sub-questions within these research questions. The second part of the chapter (Sections 4.5 – 4.9) set out the research methods employed. This involved a detailed articulation and justification of the data collection and sampling approach. This was followed by a review of the ethical issues in this study, including issues associated with insider research and elite interviewing. Finally, the six-phase approach to analysis was articulated.

The fieldwork for this study took place over a five month period, with the 14 interviews being undertaken over 13 separate days. This involved travelling some 6,300 kilometres (almost 4,000 miles) to meet with presidents in locations throughout Ireland. The duration of interviews ranged from one hour and 8 minutes to two hours and 28 minutes, with an average time of 104 minutes. Notwithstanding the time involved, the fieldwork was the most rewarding aspect of this work. I thoroughly enjoyed the engagement with the respondents and gained really interesting insights into leadership personalities, not all of which can be reported here. I believe that these subtle nuggets of learning, which I have garnered from spending hours with this group of higher education leaders, will inform and shape my own thinking and leadership approach into the future.

Chapter Five

Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews undertaken with all of the presidents of institutes of technology in Ireland. The approach to data collection and analysis and synthesis of research findings was described in detail in Chapter 4. The process began with data preparation, which involved transcription of interviews, initial labelling and immersion in the data. Further reflection on the data resulted in breaking the findings down into themes under each of the three overarching research questions. Breaking down the data into themes and codes was guided by the research questions and the literature review. In applying trait, behavioural and contextual dimensions, this research contributes to the field of leadership research by taking an integrative approach to the study of leadership as advocated by Yukl (2010).

In the following sections, findings are presented in response to the three research questions. Section 5.2 reports on the profile of leaders in the technological higher education sector in Ireland and the impact of the professional characteristics of presidents on leadership. Section 5.3 presents findings from the study on presidents' approaches to leadership within and beyond the organisation. Section 5.4 reports on the influences of contextual factors on leadership practices. The voice of participants comes through strongly in the form of sentiments expressed and direct quotations from the interviews with presidents. In Chapter 6, key findings are further synthesised and related and located within the higher education leadership literature. In Chapter 6, the initial three categories, which relate to the three research questions, are reframed into five categories and beneath these, 20 themes are identified. From this, a conceptual model of leadership is proposed, which foregrounds the contribution of the study to the field of leadership research.

Direct quotes from respondents are used extensively in this chapter in order to bring the presidents' voice to life. Given the small sample involved and in order to preserve anonymity, quotes are not attributed to named individuals or institutions, nor is a numbering or coding referencing system used to refer to particular presidents or institutions. References to specific institutions, towns, cities and regions are also omitted, where these could lead to the identification of specific respondents. For the same reason,

some examples provided by respondents and details of events had to be excluded. In all cases, where more than one quotation is used to illustrate a particular perspective, quotations are from different respondents, unless otherwise indicated.

5.2 Leadership Profile and Influence of Professional Characteristics

5.2.1 Introduction

This section reports on findings in response to the first research question, namely: What is the profile of leaders in the technological higher education sector in Ireland and how do the professional characteristics of presidents impact on leadership? The profile of leadership is derived primarily from informational questions, posed in the introductory phase of interviews. The socio-demographic profile of presidents in this sector of higher education is a significant finding in its own right, given that this study involved a total sample of presidents in the technological higher education sector in Ireland. Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2010) point to the homogeneity in the socio-demographic characteristics of university leaders; however, no such profile has previously been published in respect of higher education leadership in the technological higher education sector in Ireland. The professional characteristics of presidents also serves as a frame to probe more deeply the subsequent research themes. In the sections which follow, socio-demographic characteristics are considered in terms of: tenure of president; career history; disciplinary background; scholarship; gender; and leadership training and mentoring.

5.2.2 Tenure of President

The tenure of presidents has the potential to result in different perspectives on leadership. The tenure of the presidents in this study ranged from just four months to 17.5 years. The average length of time which the president was in post was 7.8 years. However, the average duration does not give an accurate picture of their profile as there were clearly two different groups: either very long or very short tenure. Half of the presidents were in post for less than five years; the average tenure of this shorter serving group was just 2.5 years. In contrast, six of the remaining seven were in post for more than 10 years, with an average

tenure of 13 years. There was no relationship between institutional size and tenure. The term of office for presidents was reduced to a maximum of 10 years under the Institutes of Technology Act (2006), although legacy contractual arrangements resulted in some presidents securing a number of consecutive contracts. The issue of tenure had become a contentious one, and as a result the views of respondents on this issue were explicitly sought.

There were contrasting views on what tenure should be provided for, in some sense related to each president's own individual circumstances and tenure. Very long terms were not supported by most respondents and this view was particularly strongly held by the shorter serving presidents. A number of them (shorter tenure presidents) cited individual factors as a reason for not having long-term contracts:

> I don't believe anybody should be in a job for too long. … I think after ten years in a job, you need to move on and do something else just for your own sanity.

Other participants related their views on avoiding very long contracts to an adverse impact on the vitality of the organisation. The preferred model expressed by most of the presidents was typically for five or seven years, but with the possibility of renewal. Interestingly, this view was also held by some of the longer serving presidents, as the following quote illustrates:

> I've got a feeling ten years is the wrong kind of period, probably seven … or maybe even five and looking at blocks of that, you might be five years re-appointable. … But I say that as a hypocrite, as someone who's done it [for a longer term].

In contrast, three (all longer serving) respondents did favour longer contracts, specifically a 10 year renewable model. The idea of a single five year term (a phenomenon which had emerged because of the uncertainty associated with the proposed establishment of technological universities), in particular, was not supported. The uncertainty posed by mergers of existing IOTs to become TUs and issues relating to security of tenure were also raised explicitly by a number of respondents, especially those directly impacted:

> I think generally huge damage has been done to institutions of our size because of the inability to actually appoint on a permanent or on a tenured contract. … There isn't a second term I'm assuming when it's over and then they have to go out and start applying for jobs around the place. I think you'd be actually nuts.

Specifically, the challenge of putting in place mechanisms to secure appropriate step-down positions was raised. The original 10-year contracts had provided for a step-down position at the salary scale of vice-president (registrar or secretary/financial controller). The current scale of institutions was deemed by some respondents to be an impediment to facilitating assimilation of a former president back into the organisation:

> There's no career path put in on this, safety net thing put in. After ten years you could step down and go back to the level below you. Fine in a bigger institution where you could go into obscurity … wouldn't work in most of our institutions.

The issue of age at appointment was explicitly raised by five of the respondents. A number of respondents made the point that the current contractual arrangements were not conducive to younger applicants taking up the job, as illustrated in the quote below:

> If you get someone who's 45 and you give him a 10 year contract and they're 55, where do they go then? … I don't think the people in the president's job are paid enough to suggest, like the private sector, that a 10 year contract would sort you out.

The issue of tenure proved to be one which the presidents engaged strongly with and were willing and interested in giving their opinions on. Separate entirely from the impact of tenure on leadership, there are possible policy implications of these findings for future models of presidential tenure.

5.2.3 Career History

Of the 14 presidents, nine had spent most or all of their working careers in education, predominantly in higher education (but also post-primary and further education). 10 had previously held a role in an IOT immediately prior to becoming president. Interestingly,

only one of the presidents had previously been president of another IOT and none had previously been president of a university. Of the other four, two had come from institutions in Northern Ireland; one from England; and one from the private sector (but had previously worked in the university sector) in Ireland; only three of the presidents were originally from outside of the Republic of Ireland, a fact emphasised by one respondent:

> There needs to be … a greater international perspective in senior leadership in Irish institutions. … It needs a much more global perspective coming through on things.

Of the 10 presidents who had come from within the IOT sector, they had held a variety of different roles, though most had occupied multiple different posts in their higher education careers. Immediately prior to becoming president, four had held the post of vice-president for academic affairs/registrar; two had been head of school; two had been vice-president with responsibility for research/development; one had been secretary/financial controller; and, one had been head of department.

The presidents were asked their opinions on the extent to which their career history and previous roles influenced their leadership approach. Strong views on the influence of their previous roles were expressed by former registrars, as illustrated in the quote from one below:

> It [role of registrar] gives you a massive understanding of what happens all around the place, unlike say head of school. … You'll see how things are done in different places in different ways in the institute and across the institutes. … You've got a knowledge of it that nobody else in the organisation would have.

I also recognise the potential influence of the professional affinities between the interviewer and the interviewees here and acknowledge that others might have felt less confident in expressing similar views. Nine of the presidents had at some point of their career been head of department. The influence of the experience as head of department was strongly emphasised by many of them:

You don't forget the importance of the students … within the institution and you don't become detached from that part of the college. … I think probably subconsciously it did have an impact in terms of the attitude that I brought forward.

One president was of the opinion that it was particularly difficult for colleagues who come in from industry as presidents as they do not have that academic credibility. Others described being head of department almost as a pre-requisite for doing the job of president, and using interesting language like 'serving time', 'an apprenticeship' and 'understand the pain'; in some way this might point to a sense of selflessness and an empathy with the difficulty of the role of head of department. The importance of having served in a number of different roles within higher education was emphasised by some participants. It is clear from these findings that presidents do see career history as important in shaping their leadership approach. The roles of registrar and head of department in particular were highlighted as having an important influence.

5.2.4 Disciplinary Background

Presidents were questioned explicitly about the impact of their own discipline on their leadership approach and their perception of the influence of discipline among their colleagues. For the purposes of this study, discipline was defined as the discipline of their first degree. The findings from this research indicates that the technological higher education sector in Ireland is dominated by presidents from Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) backgrounds, with nine out of the 14 coming from a STEM background: chemistry (4); mathematics (2); physics/engineering (2); and, computer science (1). The five non-STEM backgrounds were: business/management (3); English (1); and, sociology (1). The dominance of STEM disciplines likely relates to the traditional focus of IOTs on applied technology.

Strong views were expressed by most of the presidents in relation to the impact of their own discipline on their leadership approach, with all except one expressing the view that their leadership approach is shaped by their discipline. Those presidents from a STEM background had particularly strong views on the importance of disciplinary background and

most highlighted the fact that they have a logical or analytical approach to decision making and thinking, as illustrated in the quote below from one:

> I take a logical view of things, I try to walk through things in steps. I would frequently draw flow charts if I'm dealing with a problem. So, I'd say, without even thinking about it, that my formal training influences how I … do my job.

Presidents from non-STEM disciplines similarly expressed the view that their discipline influenced them. The quote below illustrates a focus on reflexivity and the context, which are important dimensions in social sciences training:

> It probably does have an influence because you're looking and seeing … is your leadership style relevant or suitable to the organisation that you're working in.

Interestingly, many of the respondents defined their discipline against, or in contrast with, other disciplines, as illustrated in this quote from one respondent:

> Science or engineering … a lot of them think in boxes, they don't have a vision to look at things differently. … I look at things differently … I was trained to be a manager.

As indicated earlier, all presidents except one expressed the view that their leadership approach was shaped by their discipline. In the case of five of the remaining 13, some caveats were expressed; of these, two explained that their approach to leadership came from something deeper, or from a combination of discipline with other factors, such as personality or background, as exemplified in the quote from one below:

> I think it comes from somewhere else. … It comes very strongly from my sense of my own personality. … That's based on a very solid strong set of principles, that's informed by your education and by your experience. … The challenges that I had to deal with at those stages to raise the horizon, to push the boundaries to really push myself intellectually and personally, in a way, has had a much stronger influence on my style than anything else.

Two (of these five presidents) argued that research experience may be more relevant than discipline, expressed by one respondent as follows:

So maybe researchers against non-researchers is a bigger division than the disciplinary one. … The research also gives you very early experience of attaining funds, managing budgets, employing people … and delivering reports and things on time.

There were strong views expressed by 11 out of the 14 respondents on their perception of the influence of discipline on other presidents in the sector. This particularly applied in the case of presidents from a STEM background:

You can see the engineer. You can see the arts people. You can see … is a mathematician … has a business background … scientific approach to things.

It also applied in the case of those coming from a non-STEM background, some of whom were a little critical of the approach of their STEM counterparts:

That's the way they look at things, if you're a scientist, you look at it from a science perspective. If you were an engineer, you look at it from a solution basis. Get your box and put it in.

The findings in relation to discipline were very interesting, including insights into the disciplinary profile of presidents in this part of Irish higher education. The findings provided strong support from both self-reports as well as other-reports of discipline effects on leadership. However the perceived discipline effect was not universally held and in some cases was expressed with caveats. The implications of the findings in respect of discipline are discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

5.2.5 Scholarship

Different views were conveyed in relation to the importance of the scholarly expertise of the president, in part related to the qualifications and scholarship of respondents themselves. Of the 14 presidents, 10 were qualified to doctoral level and four to master's degree level. There were different perspectives on what 'scholarly expertise' actually meant; the concept was deliberately not defined when I interviewed them in order that respondents could give their own perspective on what it meant to them. In some instances

this was interpreted as meaning research-active (in all cases by doctoral qualified respondents):

> Among the academics, [they think] "you don't understand what research is really about, you haven't done it, you don't understand". … you should be able to maintain your research and that's one of the prices that you pay for the job.

Most of the respondents (11 out of the 14) felt that the scholarly expertise of the president did matter. A number of the presidents referred to the importance of having 'credibility' amongst the academic staff:

> It's important to have academic credibility and certainly, to me personally, it helps that I have a PhD.

This was seen to be particularly important among the internal academic community, but to a lesser extent externally. This was also recognised by two of the presidents who did not have a doctoral level qualification, as articulated by one of them:

> It's something that I'm conscious of myself not having a PhD. … It can be hard to present to an academic community as the academic leader when you don't have the bit of paper.

Only three of the respondents did not deem scholarly expertise to be relevant; they were very sceptical about its impact as illustrated in the quote below:

> Some of them [other presidents] might see themselves as leading academics in there but I don't think they have time to actually pursue that. … Scholarly issues might bring people to the fore and get them the job in the first instance, but if there's any impact when you're in the job, I'm not sure. (Master's qualified)

It was also suggested that the president's credibility among researchers would be enhanced if the president themselves had been research active. The potential negatives associated with scholarship were also identified by two (master's qualified) presidents, as articulated in the quote from one below:

If you came in with strong research and all you were interested in was supporting research in our organisation that will actually backfire. … You have to be seen to be fair and people have a great understanding of fairness and equity.

The findings in respect of scholarly expertise were interesting, and a reflection of an evolving sector of higher education in Ireland. It is likely that the importance of scholarship and a research track record will come into sharper focus in technological universities, not least because of the TU criterion related to the percentage of academic staff with doctorates.

5.2.6 Gender

At the time this research was undertaken, 10 of the 14 IOT presidents were male and four were female; this is in stark contrast with the university sector in Ireland where all seven presidents were male. A specific question on the relevance of gender to them was posed towards the end of the interviews; only three (all of whom were female) respondents brought up the issue of gender unsolicited in advance of that. In two cases, it was raised in the context of management structures and in one case it was raised in the context of discussions on discipline.

When asked if gender was a relevant issue for them, most of the presidents did not consider it to be important. This is a very significant finding, especially given the high profile case taken by Micheline Sheehy Skeffington against National University of Ireland Galway just months earlier. In November 2014, A Workplace Relations Commission Equality Tribunal found that National University of Ireland Galway discriminated against her on the grounds of gender regarding access to promotion and directed that she be awarded the promotion as well as compensation (Workplace Relations Commission Equality Tribunal, 2014). This perspective was particularly evident in the case of male respondents; only two out of 10 deemed gender to be relevant (and at that only somewhat relevant), while the other 8 did not consider it so, as illustrated in the comments from one of the presidents:

There's probably a different approach, just the different characteristics of females versus males. They just have a different approach to things, but that's good. It really comes down to the type of person at the end of it all. … The difference aren't due to the gender. … It makes no difference, it's how people get on.

In the case of the four female respondents, two considered gender to be very relevant, while, somewhat surprisingly, the others did not view it as relevant at all:

I've never been conscious of it. No, I've never come across any kind of overt … discrimination on the basis of gender. I think it's overstated.

Four of the presidents (all of them male) suggested that it was simply about the best person for the job. There was some reference to the forthcoming HEA review of gender, but not particularly welcoming it:

We will be under review for gender, but … I think it's the wrong issue. Personally, I think the issue is more attracting the right people, male and/or female into management roles.

Of the 14 presidents, only four felt that the issue was important for presidents:

There is a general supportiveness of more women managers, I think where it gets difficult is when you start having the debate about positive action, about quotas, about training for women, about funding being attached. (Female president)

The fact that the senior leadership team is all male is problematic. … because you do get a certain kind of macho kind of thing going on there, which I know because when we've had women in the team, the behaviour was different. … There needs to be more women in senior leadership, there needs to be more women head of institutions. So it's more reflective of wider society. (Male president)

On the other hand, there was some recognition of gender issues more generally in senior executive roles (both male and female presidents):

> I think it's an issue that if you don't have a diverse team and I mean that in all sorts of ways. … Your best management team is going to be a diverse management team. Otherwise you will end up in group think and that can be the very macho male group think. (Female president)

Comparisons were also made with the existing university sector by many of the respondents (both male and female presidents):

> It's good to have a little bit of … diversity and balance. Our sector does way better than the university system. In the entire university system in Ireland, there's never been a female President, ever. In the entire history of the state, that is appalling. (Female president)

The findings reported here are quite surprising, particularly given the timing in the aftermath of a high profile Equality Tribunal ruling related to senior promotions in an Irish university. Interestingly, this is also reflected in the section below on leaders, both within and outside of higher education, that they admire, the vast majority of whom were male.

5.2.7 Leadership Training and Mentoring

In this section, findings in relation to the leadership training and mentoring, which presidents have availed of, are presented. Insights from the presidents in relation to how to develop leadership capacity through training and mentoring are also presented.

Training

Most of the presidents indicated that little or no leadership training was available to them as presidents. Only eight out of the 14 had undertaken management or leadership training since taking office. On leadership training, quite stark views were presented in terms of formal leadership programmes available. Most respondents indicated that they had to seek out programmes, rather than anything being proposed by their own organisation or provided by the higher education sector. This pertained to presidents of both long and short tenure, irrespective of institute size:

> There isn't anything really formally available, I suppose it's an identification on your own behalf, something that may be of benefit to you.

In some cases, presidents indicated that they had undertaken leadership development, but much of this had taken place in advance of becoming president:

> Right the way through my career I've had management training, communications training, business planning training. … To develop the senior leadership team, which I am a part [of] … we've employed executive coaching.

Programmes provided by the UK's Leadership Foundation and by Carr Communications (Archimedes leadership programme) were mentioned by a number of the presidents. The dearth of appropriate higher education leadership training was identified as being a weakness across all levels of management. Most of the presidents identified the need for formal training, particularly programmes customised to the higher education environment:

> Formal training that would suit the group, tailored. … focused on institutional development … and bring people in from abroad. … There's advantage in a group of people … sharing experience.

Two of the respondents argued that international leadership programmes would be most useful, while another described the need for a safe environment for self-reflection, the implication being that a locally provided programme would not work:

> The big thing I think in developing that leadership capacity is the self-reflection, it is around that feedback … and to do that properly, you have to be in a very safe environment. … If you asked me honestly, would I go in and share a lot of the things, even some things I've said today, but certainly some of the things I've done in that leadership development? … I wouldn't because I don't have that level of trust.

The issue here would appear to be competition in the sector, possibly along with institutional egoism, which leads to low trust. The small scale of the higher education system in Ireland was also raised, particularly when compared to the UK.

Mentoring

Half of the presidents had a mentor, either in their current role, or previously. There were some very positive views on mentoring from those who had availed of it:

> Everybody needs … a mentor, somebody to take them under their wing … somebody that they can bounce an idea off. … I learned a lot from [my mentor].

> He [my mentor] is just a rock of sense, he's brilliant. … I've tried to suggest to people here, if you want to do this you need to think about getting some coaching, some mentoring. … Some of it was just a sounding board really … and then sometimes it was just a good moan … and sometimes it was just somebody to talk to.

On the other hand, two respondents had a negative experience of mentoring, as indicated in the quote below from one:

> When I came into this role, I did engage with a coach mentor. … I didn't find it that useful, you know. I tended to sometimes disagree with the advice.

Mentoring was proposed by some respondents, in part to address what one described as a lonely job, which would benefit from a support network and peer to peer support. It was generally felt that the mentor should be an experienced or recently retired president:

> Formal mentoring would really help … if there's a new president on the block, I think pairing them up at least for six months with an existing president and saying "Okay, here's your mentor" … formally, you're going to meet with them, I don't know, once every six weeks … they're on the end of a phone for you.

An important contributions of this study to practice is the identification of significant gaps in the leadership training and mentoring which are available to presidents. This presents both challenges and opportunities for the development of the technological higher education sector in Ireland.

5.2.8 Summary

In this section (5.2), findings relating to the socio-demographic characteristics of presidents were presented. These findings were reported in terms of: tenure of president; career history; disciplinary background; scholarship; gender; and leadership training and mentoring. The implications of some of these findings are discussed further in Chapter 6. The socio-professional characteristics of presidents also serve as a frame to probe more deeply the subsequent research themes in Sections 5.3 and 5.4 which follow.

5.3 Approaches to Leadership within and Beyond the Organisation

5.3.1 Introduction

This section reports on findings in response to the second research question, namely: What are presidents' approaches to leadership within and beyond the organisation? This is the most wide ranging and extensive line of enquiry within the thesis. Within the institution, this involves a detailed exploration of role definition as well as the leaders' approaches to communications and culture. The conduct of leadership beyond the organisation entails an investigation of the internal versus external focus of leadership and collective leadership. Finally, insights into leadership of change projects and self-assessment of their leadership approaches by the presidents are presented.

5.3.2 Role Definition

This section seeks to delve into how the presidents themselves perceive their role. It sets out to explore the unique aspects of the role compared to that of a traditional university president. In addition, perceptions of the title of 'president' itself are explored.

Specificities of IOT presidential leadership

I was anxious to ascertain how leadership of an IOT was perceived as differing from leadership in a traditional university in Ireland. 11 out of the 14 presidents perceived there to be significant differences; these differences can be distilled down to three main themes: regional focus; resources, and institutional autonomy.

The regional focus was contrasted by many of them with the more national or international focus of presidents in traditional universities. One of the respondents described an emphasis on the part of university presidents on the external role and particularly on the generation of additional income streams. Most respondents identified differences around availability of resources and support structures compared to the traditional universities, as illustrated in the sentiment expressed by one president:

> I think university presidents, certainly in terms of their office and in terms of their structure, have much more resources in there and they've money that they can pull in. ... Whereas with ourselves, within our sector, we don't have that luxury, particularly in the last five years where the finances have been exceptionally tight.

Specifically, the resourcing of the president's office was raised by many of the presidents. They described how the level of staffing and support that is available to a university president is much greater and how the support structures in a university are so much better. An example of this that was cited was the absence of institutional research offices in the IOT sector. The third area of difference identified related to institutional autonomy, which was raised by three of the presidents. This lesser autonomy manifests itself in different ways, including the constraints associated with broadening student access, restrictive contractual arrangements for staff and the absence of a borrowing framework for IOTs. The limiting effect of the mission of IOTs was cited by one respondent:

> The institutes are charged, particularly now in the context of the democratisation of education … with educating a broader group of students. … Being a president in an institute, on the one hand, is much more challenging because of the mix [of students].

Secondly, the institutes are not really allowed to be as selective as the universities are in terms of the choice of students.

On the other hand, three of the 14 presidents felt that there was no difference between the role of a president in an institute of technology compared to that in a university. This position is captured in the quote below from one of them:

I think there's as much variation between institutions, between universities, between institutes of technology. So I don't think that particular demarcation is valid. … I think there are some institutions in Ireland … which are universities, which would be very, very similar.

They argued that there may be some differences in terms of reporting requirements, but in terms of providing leadership, not much difference. One described how the only difference was the different context in which the IOTs operate and therefore different stakeholders.

Title of president

In the original RTCs (subsequently IOTs), the heads of the institution were called principal, later directors and since 2007, president. Presidents were probed about whether they felt the changes in title had made a difference. It was universally their view that the previous title of principal was associated with secondary schools and director with industry or with internal centres or units, as summarised by one respondent below:

When we started we were on the scale of … a second-level college. So principal was probably an appropriate title. … Director in my mind was probably more associated with business.

There was strong support among participants for the title of president, which was seen to more accurately reflect the history of the sector, the nature of the position, and the role of higher education in a modern economy:

> Titles always make a difference … and it actually parallels the evolution of the sector … Titles of the institute and titles of people do matter and they mean things.

This corresponds with Middlehurst's (2013) view of the use of the title president in some UK universities as a signal of the international positioning of the institution. The positioning relative to the traditional universities was strongly emphasised by respondents. Many of the presidents felt that the title put them on a par with university presidents. Others suggested that the title of president would reflect leadership of accountable and autonomous institutions, similar to the universities. The language of parity of esteem was used by half of the presidents in discussing this:

> You're battling being that subservient, that the universities are at a higher level than the IOTs. And that was embedded in the terms of principal and director. … The advent of president … is a very powerful one, but it's not completed that transition in terms of parity of esteem, but it has helped greatly.

There was strong sense that the title of president is important externally and in particular, it was deemed to be important in an international context:

> The word president has the gravitas that's needed and it also plays better on the international stage, I think internationally we all have … massive partnerships now with Europe and with international partners and president is understood and plays better.

This section outlined the unique dimensions of the role of president, compared to that of a university president. In addition, perceptions of the title of president were presented. It would seem that the title now forms part of the identity of presidents and how they see themselves in a broader higher education context.

5.3.3 Communications and Organisational Culture

This section presents the findings on the communications approaches and styles of presidents. The section begins by documenting the communication fora used and presidents' reflections on their effectiveness. The interviews went on to explore how access

to the president manifests itself, specifically in engagements with heads of department and academic staff. Finally, the alignment of organisational culture is explored.

Communication fora

Almost all of the presidents held general staff meeting; in most cases, these were held once per semester or once per year, but in the case of two respondents, more frequently. A number of presidents emphasised that all staff were open to attend such information sessions where they talk to staff and give them a view of what the important issues for the institution are. In the case of some presidents of multi-campus institutions, the importance of going out to the other campuses was emphasised. There were some interesting views on the motivation for having such meetings from two of the presidents:

> The biggest … difficulty in the academic institution is the paranoia factor. … It [having a meeting of all staff] does give people that feeling, this is what's going to happen. … it takes away some of that paranoia.

> It's important for people … and even as much as I hope nobody sets themselves up to do it, but if somebody wants to vent well, let them vent. It's better than them going underground.

In one case, the president had abandoned such meetings in favour of smaller meetings at department and functional level and the value of such meetings was questioned by some of the other presidents. Four of the presidents specifically highlighted the importance of communicating through other senior managers, as illustrated in the response from one:

> So it's equally as important that while something may originate at the executive, or may originate in my office, that it can be communicated down and by the people at the appropriate level and given the right context. … I'd be very strong on communicating through people.

Access to president

There was an evident openness and ease of access to the presidents by heads of department, typified in the language of 'open door' used by many of the presidents. In many cases, access was by calling to the president directly or phoning their secretary. A quite informal approach was generally evident:

> It's fairly informal. Sometimes people just call up … to see whether I'm here or not. Others, obviously will go through secretary in terms of setting up a formal meeting … but generally, it doesn't tend to be as formal.

In the case of two presidents, they described proactively going out to meet with heads of department. Five of the presidents explicitly raised the issue of making sure that this communications process would not bypass normal reporting lines (via the head of school/faculty). One example of this is presented below:

> If one of the heads of department wants to meet me, they'll go through [my PA] … will ask them … "What's the nature of this?" and "Why is it you're not going through the head of school?" There's a bit of triage almost … that happens. What I'm conscious of, is I have a management structure … I don't want to obviate that by making myself freely available.

In the main, presidents were also available to any lecturers looking to meet with them, with none of the presidents indicating that they would not meet with a lecturer on request. However, access was not quite as open as for a head of department for a minority of the presidents and as with heads of department, many of them did caveat their response:

> I probably don't encourage it as much [compared to meeting with a head of department] because I sometimes feel that they might be trying to bypass, rightly or wrongly, their own line managers. … If it's work related … the first port of call is their line manager.

Informal communications

Most of the presidents operated very informal approaches, in addition to formal ones. This emerged unprompted in the discussions on communications. The quote from one of the presidents below is reflective of this very informal communications approach:

> I do a lot of management by walking. So I'm on the corridor. I walk over there purposely to get my coffee in the morning and you meet people. … They know you're around and you get a chance to interact … and if they have an issue … they'll generally talk to you … it's a means of dissipating things.

Three of the presidents specifically mentioned the very informal approach of going to the staff canteen to sit and chat with staff:

> My management style is management by walking around. … I walk around a lot. I meet with people a lot. I make it my business to go into the canteen at lunch time … and to sit down with people and talk to people.

Organisational culture

In addition to communications, presidents were also questioned about the alignment of organisational culture with their own values. Most of the presidents indicated that organisational culture reflected their own values, at least to some extent. Unsurprisingly, this alignment was more in evidence among the longer serving presidents. One of the presidents described this as having a consistent management style throughout the institute. Others expressed a view that the two were broadly aligned, without claiming causality. The quote below illustrates the role of the president in shaping organisational culture:

> It doesn't happen naturally. You actually have to create an environment where that will happen. And it takes strong and inclusive leadership to do that. … If I'd come in from outside, it would have taken maybe a year before people would know and understand your ethos, what your priorities are … people knew what to expect and so that gave me an advantage.

On the other hand, two of the presidents felt that organisational culture was not reflective of their values to any great extent. This fits with Basham's (2012) study of presidents in HEIs in the US, which concluded that the major challenge facing presidents in introducing change at their institutions was the traditional and historical structures of culture. One of the presidents in this study felt it was hard to generalise as they have people of every political persuasion and every persuasion in terms of adaptability and enthusiasm for new ideas. Another described how the primacy of the discipline or the tribe trumped organisational culture:

> If an organisation has a negative culture … no matter how good you are it would be very hard to change it. They [academics] operate first of all as individuals. … the discipline, then the department, then the school, then the institute and it's in that order.

This section presented presidents' reflections on the effectiveness of the communication fora they use within their institutions. Findings in relation to access to the president by heads of department and by academic staff were also outlined and the alignment with organisational culture was explored. Overall, these findings would point to an open and informal approach to communications. This level of informality and access is relatively unique phenomenon in higher education, perhaps due to the relatively small, in an international context, scale of institutions involved; it may also be a reflection of the broader cultural context of Ireland.

5.3.4 Internal versus External Focus

This section presents findings in relation to how the role of president is defined by the presidents themselves and the balance between internal and external dimensions of leadership. Findings in relation to the regional versus national and international activities are offered. Finally, the presidents' perceptions of their role in shaping policy are presented.

Internal and external aspects of the role

Early on in the interviews, I asked the presidents an open-ended question about what they perceived to be the role of president in an IOT. Findings in relation to their perceptions of the role covered a wide spectrum of opinions and perspectives; I have brought these together into two broad categories: internal and external.

The presidents identified an internal aspect of their role which includes: setting vision and direction; implementing the strategic plan; creating the environment and values; legislative provisions; and, selecting the team. Many of the presidents spoke about leading the vision and direction for the institute, while others spoke about defining the academic direction which is linked to the strategy. Related to this, others described a role which focused on achievement of the aims of the institute's strategic plan to drive the direction of the institute:

> It's very much 'guiding the ship' … in terms of leading it to the targets or the key objectives or even identifying such objectives and opportunities.

Others still referred to the role of the president being about creating the right environment, setting the mood for the institution and aligning values:

> It's about creating the intellectual and physical environment for higher education to flourish and then, trying to ensure that it does. … You create the conditions for things to happen.

Within this internal dimension, some of the presidents referred to the formal role as set out in the IOT legislation (which was discussed in Chapter 2). Two of the presidents specifically highlighted the role of the president in deciding what kind of senior management team the institute will have, putting in place the right managers and the right staff. The quote below from one of them highlights the central role of the president in this regard:

> A group of siloed individuals … or a group of people who … are responsible for the strategic and operational management of an organisation. … The only person who can

actually decide …which type of organisation we're going to have at the executive is the president.

Separately, the presidents identified an external aspect of their role which relates to: contribution to the region; representation; and policy contribution. Many of the respondents explicitly highlighted the contribution of the president to the development of their region, as expressed in the following quote:

> You're very much part of the region. You're a key provider of services to the region, but also in terms of thought leadership within that. … People from all facets of life want to be involved with the president of the IOT. It gives credibility to their functions and if you ignore that … then you really are … abdicating your responsibility.

Three of the presidents described a broader representational role played by the president. This included selling the institute, representing the institute and being seen to be passionate about the institute. Finally, within this external domain some of the presidents mentioned a role in shaping national policy, in particular helping to shape the strategic direction of higher education. For some, this external dimension relates specifically to the current focus on technological universities.

Balance of internal versus external activity

Presidents were probed about the balance of their time and effort between their internal and external activity. Six of the presidents indicated that they were more internally than externally focused. The percentage of their time devoted to internal matters ranged between 60% and 80%, with five of them being on the lower end of that range:

> I would tend to spend at least … two days with non-internal issues. … It's a very important role to me to be seen and to be engaging with companies.

Three of the presidents indicated that they were more externally focused, spending more than 50% of their time (and in one case up to 80%) on external matters. In all three cases, this was substantially driven by the engagement on technological university work:

It's very TU external focused. So I would certainly say I would probably have gone from a kind of a 50:50 split to maybe a 20:80 nearly. … It's now a kind of an interesting place to sit because it's an internal, external. … And in some ways it makes it easier because … your strategy is … we're going to be a TU.

The remaining five indicated that their time was divided fairly equally between internal and external activity:

From a regional level and it comes from the TU thing … at least 50% of my time is outside. … That's hugely challenging because … first and foremost your role is to the management of the institute and the development of the institute, but it's in the context of the wider academic community.

The increasingly external focus of all presidents, even those whose time was somewhat more weighted towards internal, is a powerful reflection of the amount of change in the higher education landscape; while this is surfaced here, it is investigated in more detail later in this chapter.

Focus of internal leadership activity

Around half of the presidents expressed the view that their internal time was mainly focused on strategic matters. Strategic planning and oversight was referred to by many of them, as illustrated in the quote below:

At least half of the time, it's at the strategic level, whether it's to do with HEA compact, strategic revision, which of course you do on an iterative basis, working with governance.

On the other hand, many of the presidents indicated that their time spent internally was not always the most productive. Some expressed frustration at not being able to delegate more of the internal work and others at the amount of time spent in meetings:

It goes back to the tradition of being highly centralised in our management and control. … There are far too many committees which the president is expected to chair. … Your role is … the strategic development, implementation and direction of the institute and to me that's a much more important role for a president than chairing day-to-day meetings.

Some of the presidents articulated a desire to stay away from operational matters. One of the presidents explained that they tried to stay away from the operational implementation and control and only get involved when an intervention is necessary. A similar view was expressed by another president:

I would be telling my managers, "Look, I don't need to know that. You're the head of function, you have a budget. We have an agreed plan, that's part of the plan, go ahead and do it." I don't like people managing, as they say, upwards and I don't want to be involved in those issues.

The focus of external leadership activity was explored in more detail, specifically the balance and emphasis between regional, national and international elements of external engagement. These are each addressed in turn below.

Regional

The regional role was seen as the most important one by most of the presidents. This was particularly the case for presidents based in institutions outside of the major cities. Some spoke about the role of the institute as the economic catalyst for their region. Others described the important role they played in applied research, engagement and industrial development. Many of the presidents expressed the view that the IOTs are a critical player in regional development:

The regional role … economic development and a lot of interaction between ourselves and the Enterprise Ireland offices in the region … a lot of IDA itineraries coming through the region.

There was interesting perspective from three of the regionally-based presidents around the importance of being seen and being visibly in support of the region, epitomised in the quote below from one:

> You have to be visible and you have to be known. … It's very important to be known in the region and it's very important that … every day you step out, you don't step out as yourself … whether you're on duty or not on duty you're still the president of the institute of technology.

In contrast, three of the city-based respondents were of the view that the regional focus is less significant for institutes based in the major cities:

> IOT's have moved away from a regional focus. … I would say if you went down to Tralee maybe or you went to Donegal … or Sligo or whatever, have to have a much more regional focus.

One of the presidents expressed the view that the external role of the president should mainly be at national level, and that the regional role should mainly be for others senior managers.

National

A somewhat surprising finding was the degree to which almost half of the presidents did not see themselves as playing any role at a national level, let alone internationally. A number of them spoke about their role previously in chairing the council of presidents in IOTI as being their national role, as well as some of the related media engagements. A relatively passive approach was expressed, and much of the discussion focused on the role, and shortcomings, of the sector rather than that of themselves and their role or position nationally:

> Nationally … as a sector, we have undersold ourselves. … We need the sector to have a higher profile and rather than each institution doing it.

In contrast, the other eight presidents did see themselves playing a leadership role nationally, at least to some extent. Three of the presidents saw themselves as playing important roles on the national stage, as demonstrated in the quote below from one of them:

> I'm probably one of the presidents who's most connected to educational policy, research policy, to activities at that level, nationally and internationally. … A lot of my time will be on the national stage. … The future of our sector is hugely dependent on the ability of the presidents to articulate and shape that future. …It is extremely important that … the percentage of your time outside is mostly done nationally from my perspective.

Interestingly, these were the same people who also asserted an international focus. The other five others saw some national role for themselves, but that role was somewhat narrowly defined, mainly focused on leadership and advocacy for the technological higher education sector.

International

It is worth noting that most respondents gave no response whatsoever on this issue. Others referred to the role or performance of their institution rather than themselves. Others indicated that it simply was not a priority for them:

> I'd have to say I haven't put a huge effort into it. … Two good reasons for that: one is, I don't have huge interest in international travel. It just doesn't appeal to me at all. But secondly, we have a very capable international office.

Only three of the presidents saw themselves as playing any kind of a leadership role on the international stage (as articulated above, all of whom also saw themselves as playing a role on the national stage):

> I'm in invited to speak all over the world. … I'm not sure that people are inviting … someone who they think has a lead [leadership role], who is presenting an Irish perspective or anything else. I'm presenting the institutional perspective.

Shaping policy

Only a small number of the presidents saw themselves playing a leadership role in shaping national policy (again, there was a significant crossover with those presidents who also asserted a national/international role above):

> Educational policy … as presidents of higher education institutions, we have a very, very strong influence on that. And if we don't take every opportunity to make our case and to make sure that it's heard and that also our sector is heard and that's a constant battle.

Some presidents felt they had a role in shaping regional policy, but not national. Many respondents saw this as a role for the IOT sector or IOTI, rather than themselves:

> You can shape local [economic] policy, there is a chance to do that, but national policy I think is probably done through the collective IOTI rather than individual presidents and it's something that I think our sector maybe isn't good at as universities.

In this section, I have presented findings on the balance between internal and external leadership activity of presidents. This section further outlined key findings on the engagement of presidents regionally, nationally and internationally. Their perceptions of their role in shaping policy were also presented. These findings contribute significantly to our understanding of leadership practice. Notwithstanding the importance of regional impact, the shortcomings identified here in respect of contributions to national and international higher education practice and policy represent a serious challenge for future leaders in the technological higher education in Ireland. The following section builds on this in exploring how collective leadership is expressed among presidents.

5.3.5 Collective Leadership

This section explores the nature of collective leadership, and specifically how it is expressed when the presidents get together under the guise of the Council of Presidents of IOTI. The nature of the role of rotating chair, in particular, is explored. Finally, perceptions of the presidents as to the leadership of their president colleagues are revealed.

Collective leadership

There was a strong consensus among the 14 presidents that there was a weakness in the leadership provided by IOTI, the national representative body for the institutes, and a belief that IOTI should play a more central role in advocating for the sector. At the time this research was undertaken, 13 of the institutes came under the umbrella of IOTI and membership discussions with DIT were underway. Related to this were advanced negotiations to form a new representative body which would replace IOTI and represent the entire technological higher education sector (comprising IOTs and future TUs).

There was little evidence from the interviews with the presidents of a sense of united collective leadership among the presidents themselves:

> I think it's pretty obvious that they are 13 autonomous institutes of technology. … It's a hugely diverse group and a hugely diverse range of colleges.

What was interesting here was the extent of recognition of the root causes of this, and especially of competitive conflicts. The disparate nature of the sector was highlighted, which in many ways contributed to an absence of collective leadership. The perspective of one of the presidents highlights the challenge involved:

> It's the lowest common denominator in the sense of trying to get agreement … because it's not a homogenous sector. … A geographical isolated area … then you have people … that are co-located based with an existing university and then you have the Dublin based ones which are different again. … The smaller ones seem to always find it more difficult to step back and see that there is a bigger picture.

There was evidence of a further divergence emerging because of the prospect of some institutions merging to become technological universities, as expressed very clearly in the narrative from two of the presidents:

> I think we're very fragmented. … Once we address the issue around the relationship between the new TUs and the institutes. … This is hugely problematic and it's going to be hugely challenging.

> We've made some progress on a number of different issues. I think it's become more difficult over the last number of years because there been a sort of a splintering of the group in terms of the development of consortia around technical universities.

On the other hand, there was a sense that there was a need to collaborate more effectively on strategic national policy issues:

> It is crucial that as a sector, that we work as a sector, irrespective of differences in institutional strategies or cluster strategies or alliances. At the end of the day … we will have a technological sector and it is essential that that remains a cohesive sector.

Chair of Council of Presidents

IOT presidents come together as a collective grouping, referred to as the Council of Presidents of IOTI. The role of chair of the Council of Presidents rotates annually among presidents. The presidents were split in relation to their views on the significance of that role. Some saw the role as fairly significant, including liaising with key stakeholders on behalf of the sector:

> It can be a significant role … you're rolled out as the IOT representative at any national events that are on at the time. … It may be that you end up in a negotiation role on certain issues, it may also be just a representational role, meeting with ministers or whatever, and you will be leading the delegation.

Others saw the role primarily as the chair of the group of presidents, and did not deem it to be influential. Among the criticisms were the fact that it changes annually and is not independent; the latter point is expressed in the quote below:

That doesn't work because you can never clearly enough differentiate the role as the chair of IOTI versus your role as president of an institute. And you are clearly the president of an institution, you clearly have personal views.

A number of the presidents argued the case for a high profile independent chair to replace this arrangement.

Leader among leaders?

The presidents were asked if there was a leader or leaders among them at the Council of Presidents. Worryingly, many said no, or could not name anyone. This was laid out in plain terms by one president:

Most people in this system could name all the presidents of the universities, I don't think they'd name the presidents of the institutes of technology … It's partly because of the fact that there are more of us ... and we are smaller. … I don't see anybody that's head and shoulders. … I know that sounds bad but that's it.

Interestingly, there were comments from two of the presidents around others who perceive themselves to be leaders; exemplified by the quote from one below:

There's one or two that probably perceive themselves to have more influence than others and I think that that's, whether they may not be, they see themselves as being explicit in terms of their leadership.

On the other hand, some of the presidents did name a leader among leaders, in two cases naming four different colleagues (interestingly three in common). Strength and clarity of thought were two of the characteristics that had particular resonance in the examples cited:

[Named president A] is a strong leader. … You're always very clear what [named president B] is thinking and you're always very clear as to what [named president C] is thinking and probably [named president D] you always get a good sense of what they're thinking.

[Named president A] comes across as very strong … wouldn't be shy in terms of putting the view. … [named president B] which is a completely different personality. … [named president C] which is very [named region] focused, … then you have [named president D] is a completely different personality and approach to doing things.

This section presented findings in relation to collective leadership of presidents at the Council of Presidents of IOTI. The views of presidents on the leadership of their colleagues were also presented. This important theme explored the nature of competition and how that impacts on the capabilities of presidents to champion the sector. The findings would not point to a cohesive collective, likely exacerbated by the state of flux in which the sector found itself at that juncture in its development. The following section moves on to look at leadership of internal change projects and attempts to extrapolate insights into the practice of leadership from these.

5.3.6 Leadership of Change Projects

The purpose of this section is to explore leadership practice of presidents in more depth through case studies of both successful and unsuccessful internal change projects. This produced some really important insights into their leadership practices. The emergent themes are explored in more detail below. Presidents were asked to describe a major change project that they took a particular role in driving that worked particularly well. In the main, they were able to reflect on projects which they had led as president, but in the case of relatively recently appointed presidents, their examples were sometimes drawn from previous roles. I have categorised the insights from projects that were successful into six broad leadership themes: clear vision and understanding of the drivers for change; external input; providing sufficient resources and deploying the right people; extensive consultation and engagement; flexibility in implementation; and, devolving implementation.

Clear vision and understanding of the drivers for change

A focus on the need for a clear vision and understanding of the drivers for change emerged as an important theme. There was also an emphasis on listening. The parallels in the two quotes below, relating to two entirely different projects, are noteworthy:

> You need to have a clear vision of where you want to get to. And you need to then have an understanding of what the barriers and opportunities are on the ground to achieving that. The first thing was to actually sit and listen to people. … You don't impose on people a particular position, but you actually had to engage in people, put on the table what your vision is and listen to them.

> First of all, put out an initial paper as to the drivers … what were the issues internally, externally, etcetera as to why we needed a change and what possible things there could be. … That was informed by a lot of listening and a lot of themes that colleagues had complained about in the organisation … you might not agree with the solution, but at least we agree on what the problem is.

External inputs

Using external inputs was mentioned as a key factor by four of the presidents. In these separate projects, external inputs ranged from the use of external facilitators, to panels, external visits and external data. The motivation for the use of external inputs is also explained in the quote below from one:

> The first thing that we had to do was … to identify our niche strengths. … Then, we got this external panel to review it. … The most important thing is that the process is open and transparent … that people have a reassurance that the deck isn't stacked.

Two other presidents illustrated somewhat opportunistic openings which emerged from adverse external reports which were not commissioned by the institution itself. These, nonetheless, presented opportunities for change as described by one president:

> A government commissioned report … in the depths of the economic crisis to look at where can we save money in the public sector. … I could see straight away that was an opportunity for us.

Providing sufficient resources and deploying the right people

Providing appropriate resources and deploying the right people was deemed to be important by some respondents. The resources involved included financial, human and infrastructural, as illustrated in the quote below:

> What this needs is … a support infrastructure where people who are going to take the first step feel supported, feel that there are people around them who are going to work with them. … empowering people, giving them a very clear role but then empowering them … to take ownership of it. … I set up a system whereby funding was distributed.

Extensive consultation and engagement

Consultation and engagement was also highlighted. While the nature of the stakeholders involved differed by project, the importance attached to consultation remained constant:

> I did a lot of consultation, we had staff meetings, full staff meetings, we had meetings with the unions, we had meetings with students, we had external stakeholder consultation and we had a huge amount of consultation.

Flexibility in implementation

Allowing some flexibility in implementation and some compromise in the change initiative was mentioned by five separate respondents. In addition, deferring implementation or allowing for some flexibility in implementation was an approach adopted by a number of the presidents:

> Only putting a framework in place, not answering all the implementation issues which academics always want answered before they ever start doing and by the time we got them answered, they would never start them anyway.

The notion of compromise in coming to a solution was also put forward.

Devolving implementation

A number of the presidents identified the importance of devolving implementation to senior managers. One of the presidents described how senior managers were participants in the process and cascaded down the change to other parts of the organisation. In other cases this was clearly pre-planned:

> We developed a group of apostles. Yes and I deliberately would describe them as apostles in the sense of that their role was to lead in the areas and eventually go back into the area and promulgate. … You were picking senior people, people who would be well regarded in their particular school. … You had an engineer who was well regarded who had come up through lecturing, head of department … who had the street cred.

In addition to the six themes identified here, other leadership approaches were described by individual respondents. One of the presidents spoke about the benefit of piloting new initiatives outside of mainstream activity. Another used the approach of presenting a range of models/options when change was being proposed. Another president suggested, initially, involving just a small group of people, before extending to a larger group. Building an alliance was also put forward as an approach to leading change. An interesting reflection from one of the presidents was the idea of presenting the change as opportunities for individuals, to encourage their buy-in to the project. The notion of showcasing success as a mechanism to bring others on board was also proposed. Finally, there was an interesting insight from one of the presidents who advised not to jump immediately into finding a solution:

> Over the years I've learned, the thing about shock is you have to let people, 'suffer' is probably the wrong word, but certainly experience the shock before you come in and try and fix something.

Presidents were also asked to describe less successful change projects which they had lead and explore the reasons for failure. There were fewer detailed examples provided and fewer insights from same. Four themes emerged from an analysis of presidents' leadership of projects that were not successful: in-sufficient buy-in; failure to deal with people issues; insufficient resources; and adapting/postponing. The resourcing issue was also reflected in the themes attached to leadership of successful projects above, but there are additional leadership insights to be gleaned from leadership of unsuccessful change initiatives.

Failing to get sufficient buy-in from staff was raised by a number of respondents. This failure to get buy-in emanated from both academic staff and management. Failure to tackle problematic people or groups was the cause of failure in a number of cases outlined below:

> Rather than me nipping it in the bud at the beginning, rather than me actually addressing the core problem, I allowed a situation to evolve. … The weakness there as a manager was my inability to actually come to conclusion that this was going nowhere.

One president described the importance of providing sufficient resources, but also control of those resources:

> It was an abject failure. … The fundamental reason for it not succeeding, was the resource allocation … I put in this person … but that person … had no control over how they were going to bring those people together. … They didn't control the resources.

Another one of the presidents indicated that there were no projects which were unsuccessful, but there were plenty of cases that there were insufficient resources to progress. Some of the presidents described the approach of postponing or adapting the initiative, rather than failing. Similarly, another described how adapting would result in an outcome which was not entirely unsuccessful. In addition to these four themes, badly judged timing and insufficient consultation or not thinking it through were raised by two individual presidents.

This section produced powerful insights into leadership approaches from presidents who had led successful change projects. The key themes identified were: clear vision and understanding of the drivers for change; external input; providing sufficient resources and deploying the right people; extensive consultation and engagement; flexibility in implementation; and, devolving implementation. These were complemented by a set of themes related to leadership projects which were not successful, namely: in-sufficient buy-in; failing to deal with people issues; insufficient resources; and adapting/postponing. These themes fed strongly into the overarching category of leadership practice and the proposed conceptual model which are developed more fully in Chapter 6. The following section builds on these themes and delves further into leadership approaches.

5.3.7 Leadership Approach and Leadership Identity

This section aims to explore notions of leadership identity. It begins with some insights into presidents' leadership role models, particularly higher education leaders. Importantly, leadership attributes deemed to be important for effective leadership are identified. This section concludes with an assessment of leadership self-identity and leadership approaches.

Higher education role models

When asked if there was any IOTs president, either past or present, that they particularly admired, very few named a current president within the IOT sector. Some saw this as a weakness of the IOT sector, exemplified by the observation below:

> That … dynamo, that person that's proud to buck the system and to actually step up and show leadership against the political systems, against the mandarins in the department. We don't have anybody that stands out to me like that, and maybe that's something that's lacking.

Having said that, there may have been reticence on the part of some respondents to name colleagues, given that this study constituted a form of insider research, and I would have

been known to them. Some did describe past presidents with vision; gender has been neutralised in the quotes below to protect the identity of those named:

> Very straight and … strong. … A lot of qualities that allowed … to work with people at different levels and work with the department.

Some others did mention a current leader; again gender has been neutralised to protect their identity:

> [President 1] managed to be part of the region, to be integrated … played a key role at the IOTI level … played a key role at HEA level … represented … region. [President 2] conviction … trying to do much right.

> Not one of these people who shouts, but … quietly very effective. … Also an independent thinker and … won't … be pushed into directions that aren't necessarily the best for … institute.

It was also very noteworthy that current Irish university presidents did not feature in any significant way:

> I'm very disappointed with some of the university presidents to be perfectly honest with you. … The experience in the clusters, seeing the statements that have come out on a whole range of issues, from various presidents in the university sector. No I think I would be very unimpressed.

Interestingly, relatively few identified any examples of university presidents internationally either. Those that did (mainly from the UK and US) said that the things they admired about those leaders included their innovation/outward perspective and their openness/inclusivity. When asked about role models outside of education, almost all identified politicians or business people, the vast majority of whom were male. Role models from sports, media, entertainment or the arts did not feature at all. The dearth of external higher education role models may indicate a somewhat inward-looking perspective on leadership, which is not benchmarked or considered in an external or international frame of reference.

Leadership attributes

The presidents were asked to identify the attributes they considered to be important for effective leadership. While there were many and varied responses to this question, six key leadership themes emerged: integrity; vision; empowerment; communications; decisiveness; and passion and belief.

Integrity was the attribute named by the greatest number of the presidents. The importance attached to integrity is captured in the quote below:

> You have to be seen to be straight and have integrity. … And treat people fairly. I don't think anyone actually minds being told … negative news, once it's seen to be fair and a fair decision, it's not a biased decision.

Having a clear vision was also seen as an important leadership attribute by many of the presidents:

> You need to have a very clear vision of where you want to go and that perspective always needs to be there … that sense of direction.

As noted above, vision also featured when discussing higher education role models. Empowering others and not being egotistical were also proposed. One president described the importance of a culture of empowering people if you want people to do things, as nothing happens without people. Another described how sometimes people who are very clear leaders can also be surprisingly in need of validation. The two quotes below capture this eloquently:

> It's not about the president reaching their potential, it's not about the president achieving this … it's about the ability to ensure that others reach their potential, both the staff and the students. … So it's not about the cult of the leader, it's about what that leader can achieve so that others achieve their best. That's really what academic leadership is about.

The identification of the institution with the leader is important but it's also important that it's not dominated that the leader that you remember the person rather than the institution. I think it's achieving the balance that … the leader recognises that they have a role in terms of being the leader within the institution but that role is very much about the promotion of the institution rather than the promotion of the individual.

Communication skills were named as a key attribute by many of the presidents. One president described how you can never communicate enough because you don't reach all of the people. The importance of communications is highlighted in the quote below:

You have to be a very good communicator, I think you have to be able to advocate very well and very strongly … because it's not a sector particularly well known.

Determination/decisiveness was put forward by a number of the presidents as an important leadership attribute. One leader explained that it helps if there's a very strong position that then can be matched with a determination and a work ethic to achieve it. Another described how a president has got be able to stand up, particularly around industrial relations issues. One of the presidents summarised this factor neatly:

It is about being clear and being decisive. … At the end of the day there are difficult decisions to be made and I think you have to have the authority to make those difficult decisions … staff have to know that you can call it if it comes to it. … I think where staff get wobbly is if there's a change of mind going on all the time.

Passion and belief in the organisation was also mentioned as a leadership attribute by some presidents:

They fully believe in the institute that they're head of. … They have to be brutal in their assessment of the organisation, but gentle in changing it.

In addition to these six key themes, other attributes were mentioned by one or two individual presidents, including: business/management skills; scholarship/academic credibility; building a team, and, empathy.

Leadership style

The presidents were asked to describe their own leadership style. I have drawn out five themes from their responses: transformative change; collegiality, inclusiveness and distributed leadership; situational leadership; decisive control; and, 'not my predecessor.' Clearly there are some parallels with the factors identified in the preceding sections. At least five of the presidents focused on having a vision or saw their own approach as being transformative or change oriented. One of these presidents described how they changed the organisation, including its identity and profile. Another positioned innovation, transformation, empowerment in driving the organisation as being core to their management style. Another described themselves as the "ideas person", the one at the beginning of the project who will dream it up. The quote below provides some further insights into this leadership attribute:

> Knowing where or having a good feeling of where I think what should happen. In terms of where the organisation needs to go. … A vision … of where it needed to go and then presenting that to people.

Many of the presidents described notions of collegiality and inclusiveness. Some of the concepts presented here were: including people; encouraging people; bringing people with them; inclusive and open; building teams of people; and, making sure that inclusiveness is one of the core cornerstones:

> I genuinely value everybody's input, but I know once I get that … you need to move on, make the decision. … It is open door, you know, it is collaborate, consultative.

Related to this was the notion of distributed leadership:

> I would work with the executive board and we work as a group. I don't impose decisions, I've never done that, never had to do that. We take decisions as a collective and we sometimes disagree. … So I'd say my style is distributive and consensus oriented.

Three respondents described essentially a situational leadership approach. Respondents described how the president's style has to lend itself to be suitable to whatever the situation is at the time:

> I think that my leadership style is flexible. How I would deal with a trade union is maybe different how I deal with a bunch of academics or how I deal with a bunch of technicians. My style will vary, to a certain extent to match the needs of that situation. So if I only have the one style, I think I can only deal with one type of situation.

A contrasting leadership style came through from a small number of respondents, which was more decisive, perhaps almost dictatorial:

> When you do consultation, people describe it as not meaningful and unfortunately most people they confuse the word consultation and consensus. … Academic institutions they're viewed by the academics as a peer body so you know, the president can be part of that but … you have to be a benign dictator at the end of the day.

Interestingly, many of the presidents described themselves in contrast with their predecessors. This may reflect a lack of self-confidence, in the same way that some of the presidents continuously defined their institutions or the IOT sector against universities.

> I suppose you react to predecessors. My predecessor, you know, was certainly a micromanager and I see my strengths and the needs of this institute to be a strategic leader. So I appoint managers and I expect them to manage and I think academics need to have the freedom to express themselves.

In addition to these overarching themes, a number of other perspectives also emerged from individual presidents. One respondent described an incremental approach based around constructive ambiguity in that you get people on the page in as much as they can agree with and leave other items for later. Another president reflected on the loneliness of the role and the fact that at president level there are no peers. Another president emphasised the importance of enjoying the job.

Strengths

Presidents were asked to identify their strengths as leaders. Interestingly, none refused to do so and they appeared to be very open to what could have been seen as an intrusive question (which for that reason was left until late on in the interview). Four themes emerged in terms of strengths mentioned by multiple respondents: listening; vision; clarity and decisiveness; and, passion for students and the institute. Listening to the views of others was mentioned by many of the presidents. One of the presidents described how they would listen to people and take opinions on board and make decisions based on taking into account all their opinions. Another expressed similar sentiments:

> I value the other people's judgements … previously we had individuals as presidents who … possibly thought they could do everybody else's job ten times better than the person who's doing it.

Vision, was also mentioned by a number of the respondents who described bringing clarity of thought and vision. Clarity and decisiveness was also mentioned. One president described clarity of thinking and clarity of communication, being able to make the tough decisions and being able to admit when you have made a mistake. Passion for students (see quote below) and passion for the institute were highlighted by some respondents.

> I never lose sight of students, I always connect with them. … You need to retain that connectedness and feel for what it is that drives their choices that they make. What makes them feel that they're being valued, where we can improve.

Other strengths listed by individual respondents included: extensive/broad experience; loyalty; communications style; innovation and creativity; analytical powers; and, bringing the best out in people.

Weaknesses

I was struck by how open most respondents were in answering this question; nobody refused to answer. Having said that, the number of weaknesses identified was far fewer

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than strengths, although this is hardly surprising coming from people in senior leadership positions. Five of them identified weaknesses as relating to their leadership style or approach. There were no strong themes emerging here, so a quote from each of them follows, to give voice to those weaknesses:

> I'm more a manager. … I probably should be more out there. … Maybe a preference to be running the place rather than wandering the globe doing wonderful things.

> Sometimes maybe I take longer over a decision than people would like me to. … Where there is a very significant decision to be made, I'll try and gather as much information as I can, I'm not inclined to jump but some people maybe will think that I should make a quicker decision.

> I have to recognise my own limitations and primarily I'm not a finisher. I'm a starter. … I can start a lot of things, but if I don't pull people in behind it, they can die on the vine. … I don't believe I use enough management techniques to achieve those things.

> Probably the job makes you, I think, you develop a very sort of cold decision making style. … People don't like cold people, they don't like analytical people very, very deep down.

> I'm very emotional and that's not good in management, it's good at rallying the troops but I can have a tendency to get into an argument with people which is not good. … I can be poor at … distinguishing between something that's important and not important.

Two of the presidents referenced impatience as their weakness, although this could be interpreted as a weakness in others! Others referred to more personal characteristics such as being influenced by others; trusting people too readily; and being very unstructured.

5.3.8 Summary

Section 5.3 explored presidents' approaches to leadership within and beyond the organisation. Within the institution, this meant looking at role definition as well as their approaches to communications and culture. The conduct of leadership beyond the

organisation considered the internal versus external focus of leadership as well as collective leadership. Most importantly, insights into leadership of change projects and self-assessment of their leadership strengths and weaknesses were presented. These insights into the conduct of leadership formed an important part of the conceptual model of higher education leadership proposed in Chapter 6.

5.4 Contextual Influences on Leadership

5.4.1 Introduction

This section reports on findings in response to the third research question, namely: How are leadership practices influenced by contextual factors? This question involves an exploration of potential contextual factors including: leadership in different higher education domains (teaching and learning; research; and engagement); changing national policy priorities; and, higher education landscape reconfiguration.

5.4.2 Leadership in Different Higher Education Domains

Boyer (1990) classified the purposes of higher education as being: scholarships of discovery, integration, application and teaching. Similarly, the Hunt Report (DES, 2011) described the mission of HEIs in Ireland as encompassing three inter-connected elements: teaching and learning; research; and engagement with wider society and internationally. In this study, participants were asked whether they had a different leadership approach for the domains of: teaching and learning, research and external engagement. Overall, there was relatively little differentiation in the leadership approach, that is, little evidence of situational leadership in respect of these three domains. There was some limited recognition of the need for different approaches, but only among three of the presidents. In these cases they felt that there were quite different development needs associated with the three domains, which need different things from the president, as exemplified in the quote below from one of them:

Teaching and learning has to come from the bottom up. … So my leadership style there is actually, I'm not seen, I lead from behind. … [On research] you have to be more proactive, but at the same time, I do think it's important that you then let the researchers … lead their own research, talk about their own research. … Engagement … you are the one who … has to be seen to be the one leading it.

Most of the presidents instead articulated a narrative around where their main focus was or what actions they took in respect of teaching and learning, research or engagement. Interestingly, almost half of the presidents did not highlight any one of the areas in particular, or described spreading their efforts across the three equally. Almost half (six) of the presidents expressed the view that teaching and learning, research and engagement were equally important (interestingly a broadly similar point was also made by two of the presidents who identified teaching and learning as their main focus) and would not particularly prioritise any one of the three areas:

I would see them being equal and spend the time to make sure they're equal. … Community engagement links into aspects of … our research, which links into teaching … these things are connected. … It's a balance between things. Not everybody has to do everything. … I'm often looking for quite deliberate synergies, between the different activities sort of win, win.

Insights into teaching and learning, research and engagement respectively are presented below. Of the eight presidents who did indicate their area of focus, most highlighted teaching and learning. Five of the presidents indicated that this was the domain where their main focus would be. For some of them, this related primarily to institutional focus and priorities; for the others, it related to their own background and expertise:

The teaching and learning would have been at the core of where I came from, so I would have a very strong interest in that, but I have to make sure that I don't let my own personal experience and interest influence me to work too much in that area to the detriment of the other areas.

These findings are not entirely surprising given the original focus of IOTs on vocational training and undergraduate teaching. It does, however highlight the leadership challenges in growing a research culture in future technological universities. Research was identified as their primary focus by just one of the presidents:

> I would have a very strong background in research. … Where I can really bring added value will be to drive the research agenda. … It has to be my priority.

Three respondents explained that their main focus was not on research because they did not have a strong research background. That point was also made somewhat starkly by one of the other presidents:

> Researchers only respect people who have researched, who have supervised and who have published. No there hasn't been a big feature of presidents in institutes of technology. … You should be able to maintain your research and that's one of the prices that you pay for the job. … It's one of the … things I regret, I had a number of PhD students.

One of the presidents indicated that research was becoming increasingly important due to the move towards technological universities. Findings here would certainly point to leadership challenges for any future presidents of technological universities. Only two of the presidents identified engagement as their main focus, as illustrated in the quote from one below:

> You're very much the face going out, you are the direction. … You're not doing it on your own by any means, but you certainly are often the one who opens the door.

This is somewhat surprising given that, as articulated earlier in this chapter, many of the other presidents saw external engagement as a strength of their institution and of the IOT sector:

> Institutes of technology, have always been very much engaged in that community, both at SME sector, multi-national and with the agencies. So we do that as part of our DNA.

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As is the case for research, there is likely to be a different focus in the emerging technological university environment.

Separately, respondents were asked if they felt that the president could have multiple identities – leadership, management, academic, research. This gave some further insights into where their focus lay. Not all respondents engaged fully with this question, but of those who did, two broad approaches were evident. The first group of responses highlighted the primacy of their overarching leadership role; this may also explain the absence of situational leadership in relation to the three higher education domains above. The quote from one of the presidents below gives a sense of that perspective:

> The academic stuff is important and staying abreast of what's happening within the sector and … international best practice. But I think for me leadership ability and skills is perhaps more important … than somebody who is a really good researcher.

The other emergent theme raised by quite a few of the respondents was the importance of building a team around themselves, as illustrated in the quote below:

> The critical one is providing the leadership and if you build your competency people around you, that will do the piece say on the academic and who do the piece on the research and as long as you have an understanding and the capacity to be able to understand and interrogate the data that comes from that, then that's fine.

The surprising conclusion from this line of inquiry was the limited evidence of situational leadership across the three domains of higher education. There were interesting insights into the focus, or otherwise, of presidents in each of these domains. These have important implications for the future direction of leadership in technological higher education in Ireland.

5.4.3 Changing National Policy Priorities

Section 2.4 of Chapter 2 articulated the key drivers of change in Irish higher education policy. The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DES, 2011) set out the

possibility of establishing technological universities. This was followed by the development of a system performance framework by the HEA. The other significant changes relate to the funding environment, namely a period of austerity and budget cuts which followed the financial crisis in 2008, and the introduction of a new funding model for higher education. The implications of these issues for higher education leadership is the focus of this section.

Conditions for leadership

Presidents were asked whether they felt the conditions for leadership had changed; this was a deliberately unprompted question to identify, unsolicited, what they felt the main issues and challenges were. On the basis of issues being raised by two or more presidents, I have summarised the changing conditions for leadership into six main themes: financial issues; increased focus on governance and compliance; performance management; technological universities; reduced flexibility; and the pace of change.

Foremost of these was financial impacts; this was highlighted by five of the presidents. The enormity of the impact of the austerity measures which followed the financial crash is captured in the quote below from one president:

> Money was growing on trees and then all of a sudden, there wasn't any. It all evaporated. … the shock ripples through the whole system, it was just scary. The employment control framework constraints, I mean, absolutely killing.

As described by one of the presidents below, this impact of this was at both the individual and institutional level:

> Every individual … has had significant financial cutbacks, so they're dealing with their own, in a lot of cases, inability to deal with those financial cutbacks. Whilst at the same time, coming into work where resources have been heavily cut. It's a double whammy.

Secondly, the increased focus on governance and compliance was raised. The issues raised by respondents went beyond administrative burden, highlighting more significant implications for institutional innovation and independence:

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> We are falling into a trap of huge amount of control and review and reporting. … That does everything then to actually stifle any strategic role that a president would be expected to fulfil. … Governance wise … the centre … is exercising far more control, rather than the independence one thought was going to come.

This perspective is supported by Beattie (2019) who argued, using Foucault's three modes of objectification, that university administrative leaders in the UK have become: "compliant with the imposed requisites of auditing, accounting and management and prepared to endorse the government's neoliberal agendas" (p. 106).

Thirdly, the related issue of performance management and performance-based funding was also raised:

> Increasingly we're being judged … the funding now has shifted very much … to measurements of outcomes and impacts. … HEA introducing the compact … and relating that to performance.

One of the presidents, while supportive of the concept, was highly critical of the idea of taking performance funding away from institutions that are already underfunded. This move towards performance-based funding represents a significant shift in the funding model and the implications of this are explored in more detail below. Fourthly, a number of the presidents pointed to the future challenges related to technological universities. Interestingly, the quote below was from a president not in a TU alliance:

> You've got the whole issue of clusters and mergers and that's going to result in few institutions and larger institutions, so the leadership challenges are going to be greater.

Fifthly, the issue of reduced flexibility because of changes in employment legislation and contractual issues was raised. In particular, the inflexibility of the current, nationally negotiated, academic contract was mentioned. It is likely that this will come into even more focus with the emergence of technological universities.

> Our current contracts focus on …teaching and learning and worse than that, they focus on purely number of hours in front of a classroom. … The contract at the moment is just too inflexible and it won't enable us to deliver on the national strategy. … A credit based entity will be more dynamic and more creative.

Finally, a more general point about the rapid pace of change was also alluded to:

> Higher education globally is changing very rapidly and we need to capture that. … The rate of change is important and embracing it is important, taking the lead in it is important.

Having identified presidents' (unprompted) perceptions of the most important changes impacting on them as higher education leaders, the particular implications of austerity, mission-based performance compacts and the new funding model are explored in more detail below.

Austerity

When prompted, almost all of the presidents expressed strong views on the challenges posed by the years of austerity which followed the financial crisis in 2008. This period also coincided with the implementation of the new funding model (RGAM); while the overall higher education budget was cut, it disproportionately impacted some much more than others. The most commonly identified impact of austerity and budget cuts was the effect on staff motivation; the implications of this for leaders is exemplified in the quote from one of the presidents:

> You're trying to lead in a scenario where everybody has absolutely no reason to try and do anything better. … Individuals have their pay cut, teaching more hours. … It's totally crazy because we're now just becoming a teaching institution. … Managing with both hands tied behind your back. … You've control over actually nothing that you can use to influence.

Another manifestation of budget cuts was the inability of presidents to invest in opportunities or make more strategic decisions:

The manifestation across the organisation is that you're constantly disappointing people around plans … including some that would lead to increased student recruitment and improve facilities for the region, but you're just not able to deliver on it.

A number of the presidents explicitly referenced the curtailment of discretionary expenditure. The main concern raised was the longer term impact on the level of ambition for the institution:

It has taken away your discretion. … You're trying not to allow that to influence the longer terms decisions that you take and trying to maintain some level of ambition for the institution. … A funnel of contraction which is difficult to get out of again but you have to sort of say "Look, there's a longer term future here" and try to move forward from there.

As highlighted in the section above, some of this related specifically to the inflexibility of contractual arrangements and restrictions. One president described a very unionised, inflexible employment control framework that they have to work within, a point also emphasised by another president below:

We're in an unenviable position because on the one hand, budgets are being cut but at the same time … we're dealing with things like inability to change the work practices. … These restrictions that are put in place are putting huge restrictions on the ability of presidents to be able to move in that direction.

One of the presidents highlighted the impact on quality, but also stressed that institutions were reticent about saying this openly. While most of the presidents emphasised the negative effects of austerity, three of them spoke about opportunities arising from this, particularly opportunities to generate income or diversify institutional income streams. The opportunity to generate income from fee paying international students was raised by two of them:

I've had to spend a lot more time on budgetary issues. … I spent more time too, making sure that all our international work became much more important to us over the last five years because the revenue coming in from that, was the revenue that was keeping us afloat and enabling us to do some of the other things that we wanted to do.

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Clearly, a prolonged period of austerity did have an impact on leadership, particularly as it pertained to staff motivation, strategic investment decisions and discretionary spending; on the other hand opportunities for diversification into new income generating activities also emerged.

Performance compacts

In 2013 a new performance framework and strategic dialogue process for higher education (commonly referred to as the 'performance compact') was implemented by the HEA, following recommendations made in the OECD Review of Higher Education in Ireland (2004) and the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DES, 2011). The new performance framework and strategic dialogue process was heralded by the HEA (2014, p. 9) as: "one of the most significant and wide-ranging reforms in the Government's wider strategy of reform of the public sector". Findings here would suggest that performance compacts have had a significant impact on presidents' strategic planning. Four of the presidents had in fact integrated the performance compact and their own strategic plans:

> I've made sure that what's in the compact is in our strategy and vice versa. … Of course, there are these headings, but within that you can set your own objectives and now, if you were stupid enough to put stuff in that was totally at odds with what's in the strategic plan, then you've dug your own grave. … It's sharpened up our thinking and I think it's been very healthy.

Furthermore, many described how the performance compact process had focused their activities, including an increased focus on areas like student retention and external engagement.

> More conscious of meeting targets … far more aware of where we are in the compact – student recruitments, research … we review everything really with the compact in mind.

On the other hand, while the performance compacts were seen as impactful by most of the presidents, there were also some criticisms of what was seen by some of them as an interventionist approach from government:

> The compact is the most dangerous because taking 10% out of what is already a rapidly decreasing budget … will invariably push organisations to be more conservative … your ability to build and implement strategy will be driven be your need to be conservative in terms of the target you set. … I view it as a very dangerous … move in education.

Other presidents were equally critical of the unintended consequences of the performance compact process, including their failure to recognise unique regional and institutional remits:

> There's this huge possibility or threat of just complete homogenisation of the sector. … How do you measure the transformation of … somebody from a broken family … the impact on them as individuals and the … intergenerational aspect. So it's this … management type of approach to education and I have a real issue with that.

One president suggested that there should be a recognition for those institutions that performed well, rather than a penalty for those that did not. In contrast with the majority view, four of the respondents felt that performance compacts did not have any significant impact; amongst the reasons cited was the limited financial implications arising:

> So far, very little because … it was only about a hundred thousand [euro]. … I don't know when they're going to ramp it up.

> I actually would be a strong supporter of it, if they actually followed through and delivered on it. … The whole problem in the public sector on the education side, it doesn't make any difference whether you achieve or don't achieve.

While the jury is still out on the claim to be one of the most significant and wide-ranging public sector reforms, it is clear that the performance compacts have had a leadership impact.

RGAM

The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DES, 2011) proposed extending the university funding model, the Recurrent Grant Allocation Model (RGAM) to all institutions. Under the RGAM model, funding is distributed on the basis of the number of students in three discipline-weighted price groups. However, overall funding for the IOT sector declined from €554.5mn in 2008 to €334.9mn in 2015 (mainly due to the aforementioned cuts associated with austerity), with funding per student falling by 34% (HEA 2016b). Many of the respondents indicated that the RGAM model had a negative impact on their funding. Having said that, some indicated that the new funding model did change their thinking:

> It probably has made us to be more aware, in terms of student numbers and what impact a falloff in student numbers has.

In particular, it led them to focus their activities, including a drive to increase student numbers or develop different kinds of programmes:

> Made it work in the context of diversifying into the part time students and making the model work for us. … It's focused everything in terms of student numbers … it drives you into very strong competitive space at a time when you're trying to be collaborative … there's a contradiction there in terms of the behaviours that are being supported.

Some respondents indicated that it had an impact on internal resource allocation models:

> It's no bad thing to look at the cost per discipline, per programme and to be more aware of where the outliers are. … RGAM certainly influenced a couple of decisions of pulling certain courses.

Two respondents raised the point that the RGAM weighting for science and engineering did not apply to all sources of income relating to students (for example, capitation has no weighting applied). Three of the presidents had a perspective on RGAM that was in stark

contrast to that of their colleagues; the reason being that their institutions would be due to get significant funding increases, but only when the RGAM model is implemented in full:

> The failure to implement RGAM, it would have had an impact on us. … We could drop quite a number of students tomorrow and … our core grant wouldn't change by anything and that's because of that moderator. … They haven't [fully implemented RGAM] because they would only put colleges that were already in the red, even more into the red.

The overall conclusion would appear to be that the funding model does have significant implications for leadership and has a direct impact on leader behaviours. This has important implications for higher education leaders, but also for higher education governance and funding.

5.4.4 Higher Education Landscape Reconfiguration

As articulated in Section 2.4.2 (Chapter 2), the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (2011) proposed the concept of regional clusters of independent HEIs working together, and more significantly, set out the prospect of IOTs becoming technological universities. In this section the implications of this reconfiguration of the higher education landscape for the IOT presidents is explored.

Technological University

The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (DES, 2011) established the possibility for a group of amalgamated for IOTs being re-designated as TUs, although the final eligibility criteria for designation (see Appendix 5) did not firm up until the Technological Universities Act was passed in 2018. At the point which these interviews were conducted, there were four consortia (comprising ten institutions) at various stages of the formal application process, while four of the institutions were not aligned to any TU consortium; two of these subsequently joined together to form a fifth consortium, leaving just two institutes outside of the TU process.

Presidents were probed as to whether the prospect of becoming a TU had changed the interactions among presidents, and for those involved in a TU consortium, whether power relationships had already begun to change. This line of questioning was particularly difficult for two of the presidents in that their consortium was going through a challenging time and was subject to an external review at the time interviews were being conducted. Separately, as a senior leader within another consortium I had to be aware of issues of confidentiality and other sensitivities with the three presidents in my own TU consortium. Many of the respondents, understandably, were somewhat evasive in their responses to questions about power relationships between presidents and often referred to interactions between the institutions rather than between presidents. Lumby (2019) suggests that both direct and more subtle forms of power are all too evident amongst leaders, while at the same time being subject to pressure to obscure the use of power. This meant that power was challenging to surface through direct questioning of presidents, and only came through to a limited extent:

> There was an issue … that's going away, but … that doesn't go away overnight … and it's naïve of me to think that I can come in and have a different approach. … There are changes in those power plays and there's more changes coming down the line.

On the other hand, at the level of the collective, an element of divisiveness had begun to emerge as some TU consortia were seen to move on a different developmental trajectory:

> There was sort of a splinter group of TU applicants that were meeting separately and one of the presidents at the meeting got up and left and went off to another meeting half way through an IOTI meeting.

In contrast, some of the respondents strongly emphasised the importance of building relationships of trust among the presidents in their TU consortium:

> You would have to get to know and I suspect you have to get to like and trust, well maybe not like, but you certainly have to get to trust, the other. … At the very beginning you have to decide "Well, now who is going to be the president of the new organisation?" I think if you don't sort that one out … it's like the ghost … it's just hanging around.

We probably are less in competition with each other and are actually more collaborative. …
My thinking has changed quite a bit. … It hasn't all come to fruition yet, but … it has the
major potential to be positive. … The level of trust … has grown hugely. … From a
president level, there is respect, there is trust, there is parity of esteem and we can work.

Other presidents were quite open about some of the individual and institutional challenges
involved in working towards the objective of becoming a TU. The quote below from one of
the presidents illustrates these challenges:

Presidents are very much presidents of their own institutions. … Until people can see some
carrot at the end of all of this that will benefit each of the individual participating
institutions, I think that will always be the case.

Others were quite open about their fears for the future. Two of them highlighted the risk of
the president becoming very removed from people on the ground, a fear articulated in the
quotes below:

[In a TU] you could actually fear becoming far too removed from your own institution.
That you'll be up here in the hierarchy thing, but then whoever's behind you will be doing
the work. And that's something that we need to make sure that that doesn't happen.

It's going to mean a complete disconnect between the executive management of the
institutions and the people working on the ground. … You're going to end up with some
sort of an executive super structure. … You'll end up a very managerialist approach.

Two others spoke about their fears of becoming removed from the region and original ethos
and remit of the institute, as exemplified in the sentiment expressed by one of them:

We still have to keep an eye on and then emphasise the regional remit as much as a national
remit, when we become a much bigger entity. … In terms of participation rates … there's
still work to be done and the concern I would have is that we … might forget that.

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These quotes speak to a real uncertainty, reflective of a period of very significant change for the presidents, both personally and professionally. Those comments are perhaps best understood when one considers the alternative of not pursuing the TU ambition. There were strong opinions expressed by many of the presidents about the risks involved. In particular, the potential to go from a traditional binary environment to an even more fragmented higher education system was flagged:

> You have the traditional universities, technological universities, institutes of technology, then you have ETBs with their further education colleges in that space. … So you have to ask yourself … do you want to stand alone … or is it better to be in a larger entity with greater resources. … Ultimately, I would see the others merging as well.

> I would fear that five years, six years down the road when we get the first TUs, it will begin to fragment into kind of a two-tier system. … There's a big danger there that the recognition within the academic community will decrease.

Some went so far as to question the future viability of IOTs who do not go down the TU path:

> [is named IOT] going to actually survive? You know, it could be taken over, but it will be a takeover, not a merger.

There was also a view that some of the four institutes outside the TU process may not remain as such. Interestingly, the narrative around the risk of different 'tiers' forming was used by three of the presidents not currently involved in a TU consortium:

> There is the potential of the three-tier system emerging and I could see that leading potentially among the presidents. … That is something that I do struggle with at times, but … we will meet the criteria for TU. … I do recognise that there is a risk around the strategy of not progressing to be a TU.

Given the politics and sensitivities around the development of TUs, I was struck by the openness of respondents in discussing this issue. While I had to exercise great care and tact

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in broaching the complex issues involved, but the insights given were very valuable. They provide tremendous insights into a transformational higher education restructuring, not in advance or in retrospect, but right in the midst of that change occurring.

Regional Clusters

As well as the prospect of TUs, the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (2011) also proposed the concept of regional clusters of independent HEIs working together. However, in contrast with the outlook for TUs, the views expressed by most of the presidents would not suggest a future for the cluster collaboration model. This was even more marked among the presidents who were part of a TU consortium, many of whom saw the cluster as being an impediment to TU development:

> I don't believe in the cluster concept. … I'm here to be president of [named IOT] and to be part of an engine that drives the TU. … If [named university] doesn't want to help us, then just get out of the way.

One other president questioned the very basis for the development of regional clusters:

> Weird is the only one word. … They're not real. … It's an administrative artefact and it's driven by an administrative view of there's too much duplication.

The problems associated with bringing together universities and IOT within clusters was explicitly flagged, with a strong view emerging from some of the presidents that these did not espouse parity of esteem between institutions. Taken alongside the comments above, these views would indicate a serious threat to the future of these clusters:

> The relationships in the clusters between the universities and the institutes is slightly problematic. I think that there would be an assumption by the universities that they have a leadership role. … The universities themselves haven't accepted TUs in their own right.

> Universities, IOTs have a completely different approach to life really. … You have to have a partnership of equals. … They think they can dictate and that is never going to work.

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There was a very different perspective from those presidents who were not part of a TU consortium, which would point to a contradiction in the competing objectives of clusters and TUs. Reading the comments below from two of these presidents paints a very different picture:

> We've a very strong cluster and we've a very strong interaction going on within that cluster. … We've had a much closer relationship than we would have had in the past.

> It's early days for the cluster. … We are actually getting to know each other better and getting to understand each other's needs better. … The big issues that we haven't really addressed yet are what way in future we are going to work as a cluster in terms of approval of course developments.

However, looking at these findings in the round points to an intractable contradiction in terms of the competing objectives of clusters and TUs. In light of all of these views, the future for the current model of higher education clusters is at best uncertain and from a policy perspective it would suggest a need to either reimagine or relinquish the model. An insight from one of the presidents was telling:

> Academia is very polite in the sense that we will never show any conflict at the highest level. The way we deal with these things is by failing to allow things to happen. … The way people express their support or lack of support for something is much more subtle in education.

One final issue addressed here was the presidents' perceptions of their own leadership role within either their TU consortium or regional higher education cluster. Interestingly, most (six) of the respondents who provided an example or perspective on this issue talked about a unifying approach, and in particular their role in keeping the TU consortium together. A separate quote from each is included below, to powerfully illustrate this point:

> Patience and resilience … and keeping a calmness here while … there was so much turmoil elsewhere. … It's been challenging.

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To try and keep us [the partners] getting to the expression of interest and trying to keep everybody on board. … It was becoming just a bit frayed now because we were going on … too long.

Trying to keep things on the rails in the context of managing the personalities. … There were a number of issues along the way which could have caused the breakdown of the alliance but … I intervened to try … to keep it together.

I have very much steadied heads. … I have managed expectations.

I got the people together initially, I've kept things on an even keel … and keep people on focus. Yes so I suppose I play a very leading role in keeping it together.

Explain to people it was being looked at as solving one problem but you had to try and articulate that's going to generate the following problems, which I may not be able to deliver. … We were going to destabilise even more people, just that the chances of it actually working were in my estimation, a bit slim.

Interestingly, only half of the presidents provided a concrete leadership example and while there were some other issues raised, they are not addressed here as there was no way of reporting them while preserving confidentiality.

5.4.5 Contextual Factors – Summary

This section sought to answer the research question: how are leadership practices influenced by contextual factors? The findings reported here provided insights into leadership in the different higher education domains of teaching and learning; research; and engagement. Findings in respect of the leadership implications of changing national policy priorities and the reconfiguration of the higher education landscape were presented. While some of the contextual factors had a limited impact, others have far reaching consequences for higher education leadership and for higher education policy. These are discussed in more depth in Chapter 6, which follows.

5.5 Summary

Chapter 5 is the most detailed chapter in this thesis. It attempts to distil down very complex and far reaching issues into some important overarching themes. These are presented under three overarching categories, each one reflective of one of the research questions. To begin, the profile of leaders in the technological higher education sector in Ireland and the impact of the professional characteristics of presidents on leadership were presented. This was followed by an assessment of presidents' approaches to leadership within and beyond the organisation. Finally, findings in respect of the influences of contextual factors on leadership practices were proposed. In the chapter which follows, these findings are further synthesised and located within the literature and a conceptual model of leadership is proposed.

Chapter Six

Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In Chapter 5, detailed findings were presented in respect of the three research questions posed in this study. This chapter brings together a synthesis of these findings and my reflections on the broad themes and new issues that have emerged from this research. Section 6.2 begins by extrapolating key themes relating to the influence of the professional characteristics of presidents, focusing in particular on discipline, scholarship and gender. Section 6.3 concentrates on the leadership practices, leadership dispositions and leadership approaches which came through in this study. In section 6.4 the mediating influence of contextual factors is explored. Finally, in Section 6.5, all of these elements are brought together and an integrative model of higher education leadership is proposed, building on the key findings from the preceding sections (Sections 6.2 – 6.4).

6.2 Influence of Professional Characteristics

6.2.1 Socio-demographic Profile of IOT Presidents

One of the contributions of this study is to present a socio-demographic profile of presidents in the IOT sector at a critical point in the evolution of the institutes. Similar to Inman (2014), I would argue that it is necessary to get to know more about the lives and career trajectories of leaders in higher education in order to understand what shapes their identities and how to develop them further. Following the publication of the Technological Universities Act (2018), it became clear that the landscape was about to change utterly, and that most IOTs would ultimately merge to become technological universities. Against that backdrop, this research presents a picture of presidents in a sector at a point of inflection, as they move from IOTs to technological universities. In this section, and in response to the first research question, that profile is presented.

Socio-demographic profiles of presidents were considered in terms of: tenure of president; disciplinary background; gender; scholarship; and, career history. While tenure and career

history are briefly covered, the sections which follow focus on the professional characteristics which were most significant in this study, namely: discipline, scholarship and gender. While the institutes of technology are small in an international higher education context, this study points to a relatively diverse sector in terms of scale, with the largest IOT being more than eight times the scale of the smallest. Interestingly, each of the five larger institutions identified in this research, went on to become the dominant HEI, in terms of scale, in the five emergent technological universities as discussed in Section 2.5 of Chapter 2.

This study painted an interesting picture of presidential tenure in the technological higher education sector in Ireland, with two distinct groups emerging: shorter and longer serving presidents, with none in between. The Institutes of Technology Act (2006) reduced the term of office for presidents to a maximum of 10 years. This study highlighted the impact of this policy change, with half of the presidents being in post for less than five years, while the other half averaged terms of 13 years. Croucher et al. (2020) reported a similar percentage having shorter terms among senior university executives in Australia (50% were reported as being in their current role for less than four years); however, very few were in post for more than 10 years, compared with this study. Respondents in this study were somewhat critical of shorter contracts; the preferred model of most of the presidents was for five or seven years, with the option of renewal, while a significant minority favoured the option of even longer contracts. The criticism of short-term contracts is echoed by Thorn (2018), who outlines how this has resulted in contracts variously of ten, seven, five and three years being offered and the risk of this resulting in presidents in the IOT sector having a short-term, institution-centric focus:

> Presidents' contracts in the institutes of technology should be on the same basis as those in the universities. Presidents in the institutes must be able to take a long-term view and must be able to focus externally. (p.189)

Basham (2012b), on the other hand, recommended that contracts for presidents should be limited to 5 years with only one renewal. As discussed in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3.3), the impact of tenure was not hugely significant overall, but it did have an impact in some areas, such as the alignment of organisational culture, as described by one long-tenure president:

I had a particular view of education … development of a teaching and learning ethos and educational philosophy. … People have embraced it, students are even aware of it and that is part of the identity now. … The culture has changed.

Most of the presidents indicated that their career history and previous roles held had an impact on their leadership approach. This view was particularly strongly expressed by those who held the role of registrar prior to becoming president. The experience of managing an academic department was also emphasised by most respondents. This concurs with Spendlove's (2007) finding that experience of university life, for example as a head of department, was crucial for effective leadership in UK universities. These are interesting findings, particularly in light of the fact that respondents indicated that there was little by way of formal leadership training or mentoring available to them. Having said that, other professional characteristics, particularly discipline, scholarship and gender would appear to be much more significant. These are each in turn examined in more detail below.

6.2.2 Discipline

The findings from this study in relation to discipline provide interesting insights into the disciplinary profile of presidents in IOTs, including the dominance of presidents from a STEM background, and a correspondingly low representation from business and humanities. This profile differs to that of most traditional universities. Croucher et al. (2020), for example, profiled Australian university senior executive roles and found the largest number came from the field of 'society and culture' (34%), while 22% came from 'natural and physical sciences'. This unique profile of presidents in the IOT sector likely reflects the applied nature of higher education programmes traditionally provided in IOTs.

Strong views were expressed by most of the presidents in relation to the impact of their own discipline on their leadership approach, with all except one expressing the view that their leadership approach was shaped by their discipline. The strength of that feeling is exemplified in the quote below from one of the presidents from a STEM background:

> The scientific method of … test, analyse … hypothesise, retest the hypothesis, that sort of scientific method is just so deeply ingrained in you as a scientist, that … you can't get away from it.

This tallies with Bryman and Lilley (2009), who report that higher education is itself a distinctive context in which the loyalties of academics are primarily to their disciplines. Similarly, most of the presidents could also see the discipline effect among their colleagues. However, the perceived discipline effect among presidents was not universally held and in some cases was expressed with caveats.

6.2.3 Scholarship

Most of presidents in this study were doctoral-level qualified; however, in the case of four of the presidents, their highest qualification was at master's degree level. Many of the presidents highlighted the importance of a president having academic credibility, particularly among academic staff. This accords with Spendlove's (2007) conclusion that academic credibility was crucial for effective leadership of PVCs in UK universities – being seen and respected as an academic. Oleksiyenko and Ruan (2019) also highlighted the role of intellectual leadership in higher education, focusing on questions around barriers to the development of intellectual leadership. There was a recognition among presidents in this study that intellectual leadership and academic credibility were becoming increasingly important, particularly in new technological universities, as articulated by one of them:

> It's critical now. … 20 years ago it didn't matter … In the academic standing of leading a major academic institution, then you need to have a PhD.

The emphasis on doctoral-level qualifications has been accelerated since the passing of the Technological Universities Act (2018), which established a requirement for 45% of full-time academic staff to have a PhD and the capacity to reach 65% within 10 years of the establishment of the technological university (see Appendix 5 – Technological Universities Act (2018) Eligibility Criteria). I would envisage that the development of technological universities means that all future presidents will be qualified to doctoral level and research track record and scholarship will become increasingly important. When combined with the

findings reported in Chapter 5 in respect of training and mentoring for institutional leaders, this points to a significant gap in the professional development of presidents in the sector.

6.2.4 Gender

One of the most important factors to be surfaced, by its absence rather than its presence, was what O'Connor (2020) described as gender competence. On the one hand, the IOT sector had much better gender representation (4 of the 14 IOT presidents were female), compared to the Irish university sector, which at that juncture had never had a female president. On the other hand, gender was not seen as an important issue by most of the presidents in this study. This is somewhat surprising, and potentially quite significant, given the very high profile case taken by Micheline Sheehy Skeffington against National University of Ireland, Galway in 2014. A Workplace Relations Commission Equality Tribunal found that National University of Ireland Galway discriminated against her on the grounds of gender regarding access to promotion and directed that she be awarded the promotion as well as redress (Workplace Relations Commission Equality Tribunal, 2014).

The inference from these findings would point to a low level of gender competence among the IOT presidents, a phenomenon which O'Connor (2020) asserts partly explains the reasons for a slow pace of change in the gender profile of the professoriate in the Irish university sector. In an analysis of qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with individuals at presidential, vice-presidential and dean/divisional levels in the seven Irish universities, O'Connor (2020) identified four categories of gender awareness, in an effort to understand why the rate of change has been so slow:

> Denial of the existence or relevance of gender; stereotypical awareness of gender; awareness of gender inequality; gender competence – the latter including awareness of gender inequality, reflexivity and attempts to tackle it. (p. 146)

The HEA (2016a) review of gender equality in Irish HEIs which followed the Sheehy Skeffington case was published shortly after the fieldwork for this research was undertaken. It painted a picture of gender inequality in higher education in Ireland, with females accounting for only 28% of the highest paid positions. The report highlighted that IOTs

have a legislative responsibility to promote gender equality under the Institutes of Technology Act (2006) but found that only 4 of the 14 IOTS have a female president (as is reported in this study). Of the 54 IOT Presidents to date, 8 have been women (15%). There was evidence of greater inequality in the university sector, which by 2016 had not yet had a female president. Female membership of governing bodies averaged 44% and academic councils averaged 40% across the IOTs; however at executive management level, female representation ranged from 0% to 53%, with a sector average of 32%.

There are long-term consequences at both institutional and national level, of the under-representation of women in senior higher education leadership roles, as argued by Peterson (2018). Similarly, the HEA (2016a) report concluded that: "HEIs which allow gender inequality to exist cannot perform to their full potential" (p. 7). The findings from this study would point to a relatively low level of gender competence, as exemplified in the comment below from one respondent:

> You get the politically correct thing where they talk about glass ceilings. … You read the literature about glass ceilings and gender and things, it's a big thing now … it's one of the 'in' topics. … People bring different styles and that's not a bad thing.

This picture to emerge from this study was also reflective of an early stage in the development of political and policy thinking in relation to gender and a wider concern for equality, diversity and inclusion. In this section, I identified three key themes to emerge in relation to the influence of the professional characteristics of presidents, namely: discipline, scholarship and gender. The section which follows delves into the important terrain of leadership practice.

6.3 Leadership Practice

6.3.1 Emergent Leadership Themes

The second, and most wide ranging, research question posed in this study sought to explore presidents' approaches to leadership within and beyond the organisation. Within the organisation, this meant looking at a number of important issues, including: role definition; organisational structures and culture; communications; and, leadership of internal change projects. External to the institution, it involved an investigation of: the internal versus external focus of leadership; the scope of external leadership; collective leadership; and, leadership of external collaborations. The findings in respect of these were reported in detail in Chapter 5; but what does this tell us about the practice of leadership? In this section, I attempt to draw out the key leadership attributes and behaviours; these form the basis for the proposed conceptual model of higher education leadership in Section 6.5 below. This involved extrapolating these attributes from the diverse strands that made up leadership approaches, within and beyond the organisation. Of necessity that meant that many of the findings were not included, related themes were combined and only those that were directly relevant to leadership practice were brought forward.

Emergent themes were drawn from findings related to six principal lines of questioning within the interviews: role definition (internal and external); higher education role models; leadership of change projects (successful and unsuccessful); attributes for effective leadership; leadership style; and leader strengths. Other lines of investigation, such as culture; management structures; and leadership of external collaborations, which were outlined in Chapter 5, did not significantly contribute to this discussion or the resultant conceptual model. I have extrapolated these emergent themes from Section 5.3 of the preceding chapter and broken them down into leadership practices (the 'what' of leadership) and leadership approaches (the 'how' of leadership). These are presented in summary form in Table 6.1 below, alongside the aforementioned six areas from which they are drawn. Some of the emergent themes overlap both practices and approaches, in which case they were assigned to the category which I deemed to be the best fit.

Table 6.1: Summary of Emergent Themes

Source (Findings)	Emergent themes: Leadership practice	Emergent themes: Leadership approach
1 (a) Role definition – internal (Section 5.3.4)	Setting vision and direction Implementing the strategic plan Legislative provisions Selecting the team Creating the environment and values	
1 (b) Role definition – external (Section 5.3.4)	Contribution to the region Representation Policy contribution	
2. Higher education role models (Sections 5.3.5 and 5.3.7)	Vision	Strength Clarity of thought Innovation/outward perspective
3 (a) Successful leadership projects (Section 5.3.6)	Clear vision and understanding of the drivers for change External inputs Providing sufficient resources and deploying the right people	Flexibility in implementation Devolving implementation Extensive consultation and engagement
3 (b) Unsuccessful leadership projects (Section 5.3.6)	Insufficient resources Adapting/postponing	In-sufficient buy-in Failure to deal with people issues
4. Attributes for effective leadership (including approach to communications) (Sections 5.3.3 and 5.3.7)	Vision	Integrity Empowerment Communications (open and informal) Decisiveness Passion and belief
5. Leadership style (Section 5.3.7)		Transformative change Collegiality

		Inclusiveness and distributed leadership
		Situational leadership
		Decisive control
		'Not my predecessor'
6. Strengths (Section 5.3.7)	Vision	Listening
		Clarity and decisiveness
		Passion for students and the institute

To begin, I extracted these themes from the detailed findings in Chapter 5, and synthesised them into two overarching themes in Table 6.1: leadership practice (addressed in Section 6.3.2 below) and leadership approach (addressed in Sections 6.3.3 and 6.3.4 below). Leadership approaches were drawn from across a wide range of discussion topics, but primarily items 1-5 in Table 6.1 above. I then further refined the themes relating to leadership approach. From this initial set of themes I created two further over-arching themes, each with four separate elements. The first of these I have termed 'leadership dispositions'; the second 'leadership approaches'. Leadership dispositions refers to individual leadership values and is addressed in Section 6.3.3 below. Leadership approaches describe the leadership models and approaches used by presidents and are discussed in Section 6.3.4 below.

6.3.2 Leadership Practice

In this study, leadership practices were drawn from two main areas of enquiry, namely how the role is defined by presidents themselves and from insights into their leadership of both successful and unsuccessful change project. From the initial set of themes in Table 6.1 above, I have refined those related to leadership practice into six core themes: vision; values and culture; strategic planning; building and resourcing the team; regional contribution; and, representation. The detailed discussion of the findings behind these themes, along with related quotes to give voice to the presidents in this study, are included in Chapter 5. What follows below is a synthesis of relevant findings, where appropriate relating them to selected literature. These six facets of leadership practice form key elements of the conceptual model which I will propose later in this chapter (Section 6.5).

Vision

In the interviews with presidents, providing vision and direction came through as a central tenet of leadership practice. Indeed, vision emerged as a theme in five out of the six different discussion topics which are synthesised in Table 6.1 above. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985) suggest that followers identify with the vision of the leader in transformational leadership approaches. The quote below from one of the presidents below reflects some of their thinking around vision:

> People don't follow managers, they follow leaders. … The president … paints the vision, articulates the mission, believes in the organisation. … So you have to be very clear in articulating a future path, be very clear in articulating where it is this organisation needs to go.

Similarly, in identifying leadership attributes which are considered to be important for presidents and in characterising the traits of university presidents they admired, the importance of vision also came through from respondents.

Values and culture

Setting the values and culture for the organisation was another important aspect of leadership practice to emerge. Most of the presidents in this study indicated that organisational culture reflected their own values; this was particularly the case for longer serving presidents. One president described it succinctly:

> Essentially it's about trying to create the right kind of environment, ethos, attitude.

Schein (2004) argues that the creation and management of culture are uniquely associated with leadership and that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin. Latta (2019) similarly argued that leaders will be successful where they practice forms of leadership aligned with the organisation's cultural norms.

Strategic planning

Strategic planning was another central tenet of leadership practice to come to the fore in this study. It is also one of the requirements of the president of an IOT which is explicitly set out in legislation. One of the presidents in this study spoke about strategic planning being the primary role of the president:

> The primary role is the leadership role in the context of the implementation of … strategic plan and in a general sense, government policy as it pertains to higher education in our sector.

This resonates with other studies, for example Badillo-Vega and Buendía-Espinosa (2020) found that presidents primarily played the role of strategists, legitimators, and motivators; a finding explained by the focus of many universities on meeting the demands of society.

Building and resourcing the team

The importance of selecting and building a senior management team came through at various stages in the interviews. Deploying resources more generally, both human and financial, was raised by presidents, particularly when exploring case studies of both successful and unsuccessful change management. This point is made clearly in the quotes from two of the presidents below:

> The president maps out the direction. You then build a team around you to enable you develop a plan to deliver on that.

> You then have to empower those people because if you don't empower the people to do the jobs and … whatever resource you have to be able to deliver on that.

This is also borne out in some of the higher education leadership literature. Scott et al. (2008) found that managing relationships with senior staff was one of the top four most important work areas for pro vice-chancellors in Australian universities. Kezar, Dizon and

Scott (2020) similarly identified the centrality of senior leadership teams in facilitating change in higher education.

Regional contribution

Regional contribution emerged as an important aspect of leadership practice unsolicited, but also very powerfully when exploring presidents' external engagement, regionally, nationally and internationally. The regional focus of IOTs was highlighted by many of the presidents, exemplified in the quote below from one:

> We weren't called a regional technical college just for nothing in the context of what we're trying to achieve but in the regions that we operate in. So therefore our focus is very much … the region.

Compared to making a contribution on the national or international stage, the regional role was deemed to be their most important role by most of the presidents, particularly those located outside of the major cities.

Representation

A representational role was also identified as an important aspect of leadership by presidents in this study, or as one president aptly described it: "the face of the institute":

> You are the face of the institute no matter whether you want to be or not … there's a very close identity between you and the institution. … Be the conduit between the college and the external environment.

This means representing their institution in a whole range of external fora, including contributing to policy.

6.3.3 Leadership Dispositions

Within the leadership approach, the first broad theme I have identified is what I have termed 'leadership dispositions', with four sub-themes, namely: integrity; decisiveness; passion and, clear and open communications. In essence, leadership dispositions refers to person-related leadership skills and qualities. Some of these correlate with the leader dispositions put forward by Dunbar (2016). He identified a range of important dispositions expected of university leaders, including: open communication; personal openness/honesty and humanity; being able to listen well; being considerate of others; having integrity; and accepting constructive criticism. The four sub-themes to come through in this study are each examined in more detail below. These will form part of the conceptual model of higher education leadership proposed later in this chapter (Section 6.5).

Integrity

When asked about what attributes were important for higher education leaders, integrity was the one put forward by the greatest number of the presidents, as illustrated in the short quote below:

> The first thing must be integrity … if you don't have integrity … you've lost the battle before you start.

As described above, Dunbar (2016) identified integrity as one of the leadership dispositions expected of university leaders.

Decisiveness

The ability to make decisions and be decisive came through from quite a few of the presidents, and in response to different lines of questioning (for example: leadership attributes; personal strengths). The quote below from one president summarises that disposition:

There are occasions, I just say [to senior leadership team], "Sorry, I think you're wrong guys, this is how we're going to do it." And it's my prerogative at the end of the day to do it and they'll roll in behind. It doesn't happen very often, but occasionally, if that has to happen, it will happen.

Passion

Passion and belief is sometimes seen as a nebulous concept that is difficult to quantify or define. In the course of interviews with this group of presidents it was something that I picked up very strongly. It is not always easy to capture in words but came through strongly in the enthusiasm and passion with which many of the presidents spoke about their own institutions. The description from one of the presidents below captures some of that spirit:

> You need to have a very strong sense of the strengths of the organisation, its connectedness with the region and how much it can bring to the region. You need to make sure … that there is that … sense of pride … that passion … for the organisation.

Clear and open and communications

The importance of clear and open communication came through very powerfully in this study. Irrespective of institution size, all of the presidents described a very open communications approach, which included being very available to meet with people. The importance of communication resonates strongly with much of the higher education leadership literature: "Communication, along with car parking, must be the one issue that everyone in every higher education institution agrees is a major problem." (Marshall, 2019, p. 32). Clarity of communications was identified by presidents as a critical factor for leadership. The description below from one president was used to describe a former president from within the sector who they admired:

> Ability to articulate very clearly and staying with the strategy, even in spite of all the crap that was going on left, right and centre.

The issue of persuasive communication was highlighted by some of the presidents, as illustrated in the comments from one of them:

> You have to be fairly persuasive and understand the academic community. You cannot go in it trampling around on top of them because you won't achieve anything. … Because there's no better group than academics who will stop it stone dead.

This theme is also borne out in much of the literature. For example, McMaster (2014), based on her own leadership reflections, described the key role of leadership as being about influencing people.

6.3.4 Leadership Approaches

The second broad theme I have focused on is 'leadership approaches', with four sub-themes identified, namely: collegiate; distributed; situational; and transformational leadership. Based on responses to various questions and leadership examples provided, these were the four leadership approaches that came through among the presidents interviewed. Each of these are considered separately below and briefly related to the relevant leadership literature. These four leadership approaches will be components of the final conceptual model proposed in Section 6.5 below.

Collegiate leadership

A collegiate approach to leadership emerged at various junctures, in the course of interviews with presidents. In this study, the need for compromise was also highlighted, as illustrated in the quote from one president describing their leadership of a successful change management project:

> We allowed for variations within it to make sure that we got it through. So we did get it through. … It was a compromise in a sense, it was an agreement really to bring everybody on board.

As described by Hempsall (2014), not only do leaders need to have a clear sense of where they are going, they have to engage all stakeholders in that vision. A collegiate approach was described as being part of the approach of many of the presidents, including in the relationship with their senior management teams:

> I believe in collegiality, I think it is important that everybody around the exec. [executive] table has an input into the strategic decisions. … It's a collegiate style within … a framework.

This is despite the fact that O'Connor, Carvalho and White (2014) argue that most of the public universities in Ireland are moving away from a collegial model towards a managerialist one and the view from Kligyte and Barrie (2014) that current notions of collegiality are oversimplified.

Distributed leadership

The concept of distributed leadership came through in a number of areas in this study. In many cases this was expressed as the devolution of power to the senior management team. The quote below from one of the presidents describes this:

> The academic … ensuring that the institute performs in terms of its academic criteria … that's largely devolved to the registrar. … The financial and HR management, again, largely devolved to the financial controller. … but with the president having oversight of it all.

Discussions on communications also highlighted the central roles of heads of school and department. Jones and Harvey (2017) presented empirical evidence from Australia that distributed leadership is appropriate for the higher education sector. Similarly, Hempsall's (2014) work supports the case for relational and distributed leadership models. Doyle and Brady (2018) proposed an alternative approach to change leadership and strategic planning in higher education institutions in which leadership development moves to a focus on enhancing leadership capacity across the institution rather than the individual leader. On the other hand, Gosling et al. (2009) found limited evidence of distributed leadership in higher education, while arguing that distributed leadership complements, rather than replaces

individual leadership. The notion of distributed leadership presented here is similarly not in place of individual leadership and may also be captured in the ideas of a hybrid leadership configuration as put forward by Gronn (2009) or blended leadership as described by Collinson (2009).

Situational leadership

Some presidents indicated situational approached to leadership, in some cases explicitly, in others more subtly, in the form of examples of leadership practice. Avolio et al. (2009) and Yammarino et al. (2005) highlight situational leadership as one of the emergent areas in leadership research. One of the presidents was very explicit in recognising that leadership approach:

> I'm of the view you don't, and maybe it is a style in a way, you don't have one style. … there are different kinds of things that you do in different contexts. … I would consciously think about what I'm going to, maybe I'm giving too much away, … what approach I'm going to adopt … and it wouldn't be the same approach in all instances, it wouldn't be the same approach with different people.

Transformational leadership

In contrast with the three leadership approaches above, the notion of transformational change also came through as a strong theme. That approach is captured well in the description from one president below:

> There will be change. What a good president does is … anticipates, seizes the change, does the change before the change is done to and so in that sense embracing change and trying to in a sense anticipate and make the changes in a way that you believed would be to the strategic advantage of the institution for the future, it would be, if you were to ask me what was the hallmark? That would be.

Based on a study of university presidents, Bashan (2012) concluded that transformational leadership is necessary in higher education:

> Transformational leadership practices and concepts will have to be applied at an institution
> of higher education to ensure change due to the reluctance of tenured faculty and staff to
> consider changes due to personal impact. (p. 346)

On the other hand, as discussed previously in Chapter 3 (Section 3.2.3), Avolio et al. (2009) concluded that while accumulated research supports the importance of transformational leadership and significant progress has been made in studying transformational leadership, a number of areas still deserve further attention.

6.4 Contextual Influences

In Chapter 2 (Section 2.4), I discussed the main aspects of higher education policy that serve as drivers of change within Irish higher education. These formed the basis for many of the questions on contextual influences that were posed in this study. Framing the Irish higher education system using the contextual theory of leadership proposed by Osborn et al. (2002) I would describe the context as having gone from a context of stability (pre-financial crisis and publication of the National Strategy), to one of crisis and, at the time this research was undertaken, to a period of dynamic equilibrium. Dynamic equilibrium describes a change mode often attributable to competition or institutional evolution. In Chapter 5 (Section 5.4.3), detailed findings were reported in respect of the impact of these changing national policy contexts on leadership.

Gibbs et al. (2008) describe how context-dependent successful leadership is within education and caution against offering general advice in any specific context in the absence of a full appreciation of that context. In this study, the impacts of austerity, performance compacts, RGAM, TUs and regional clusters were explored. A significant finding articulated in Chapter 5 was that presidents felt conditions for leadership had changed in a number of important respects, namely: financial issues; increased focus on governance and compliance; performance management; technological universities; reduced flexibility; and the pace of change. I have distilled these findings in respect of contextual factors into three

important themes: national higher education context; funding model; and, teaching-research nexus. These resonate with some of the contextual factors identified in the literature. Amongst other factors, Gibbs et al. (2008) suggested that different contexts could relate to national higher education context, organisational culture, and whether the HEI is teaching-intensive or research-intensive.

National higher education context

While there were many changes in the Irish higher education environment, the prospect of IOTs becoming technological universities was the notable one to emerge in this study. The other aspect of national higher education context that was highlighted in this study was the increased focus on governance and compliance emanating from the higher education funding and policy body, the HEA. However, it is clear that the TU will singularly be the biggest leadership challenge for presidents in the technological higher education sector for at least the following decade.

One of my main findings was that from a policy perspective, it would be better for government policy to target one major structural change at a time, rather than attempting to bring in two or more in parallel. My findings point to the folly of trying to initiate two major, and in a sense competing, higher education structural changes in parallel. The quote below from one president sums up this challenge:

> It's a disaster. … Let's call a spade a spade. The HEA … are biting off way more than they can chew at the moment. … Is that [the TU] major transformational change in higher education? It's massive. But at the same time you're running all of these things [clusters] and I think there's a danger of making an absolute dog's dinner of it.

Funding model

Funding issues in this study centred around: funding cuts (austerity) following the financial crash; the funding allocation model (RGAM) as well as the broader approach to performance-based funding. All told, it was clear from this research that funding can have a significant impact on leadership, both the level of funding and in particular the model used

to allocate funding to institutions. Funding cuts for HEIs were judged by presidents to have impacted on staff motivation, on the presidents' ability to strategically invest in opportunities and more generally in a curtailment of discretionary expenditure. On the other hand, some of them identified opportunities to diversify income streams, including from fee paying international students. Shattock (2013) described similar impacts of market forces and austerity in the UK during the same period and an increasing convergence of the governance and management of pre- and post-1992 universities, concluding that:

> The impact of national austerity together with the implication of financial risk in the substitution of marketised tuition fees for recurrent grant linked to planned student numbers has reinforced the centralisation of decision-making. (p. 227)

The RGAM funding model is an example of a policy instrument that has influenced decision making among presidents. The quote below from one of the presidents highlights how it has shaped the portfolio of programmes offered and how, in contrast, the performance compact has had a much lesser influence:

> We are reacting directly to RGAM … we are introducing more part time courses … we are introducing outreach programmes … some of our decisions are directly related to the need to have better metrics in RGAM. … To date, compact hasn't resulted in any funding changes whereas RGAM has. So we really do work to RGAM.

Teaching-research nexus

I have noted from the outset of this thesis that the technological higher education sector is in a period of transition, from IOT to TU; this will likely result in a rebalancing of the teaching-research, nexus. As set out in Chapter 2, the origins of the IOTs were steeped in vocational and applied, mainly undergraduate, teaching. The views of some of the presidents reflect this thinking:

> Teaching and learning … it's the bread and butter of what goes on. … What you don't want to become is a totally research institution.

The Technological Universities Act (2018), however, accelerated the move towards a greater focus on research; the criteria to achieve TU status include a number of quantitative research metrics (see Appendix 5), and stretched metrics that TUs have to demonstrate a capacity to be able to achieve within 10 years. This increased research-orientation will likely have significant leadership implications, particularly for the leaders of new technological universities.
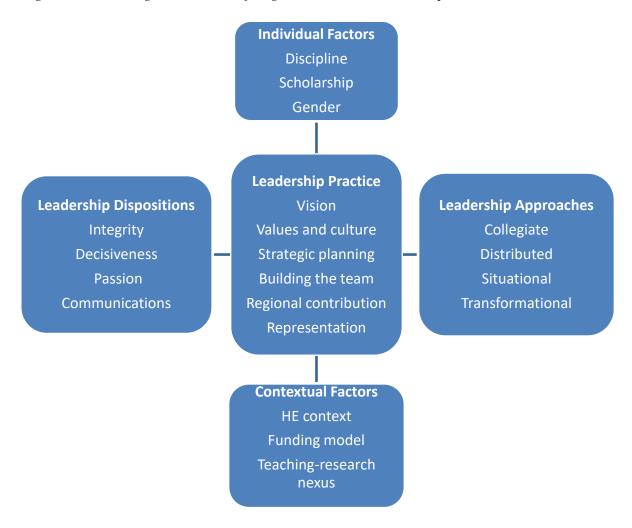
6.5 Proposed Conceptual Model

In the earlier parts of this chapter, I synthesised into five overarching categories the findings from the research undertaken among the leaders of all of Ireland's technological higher education institutions; these are now brought together into an integrative model of higher education leadership, in figure 6.1 below. The five overarching categories in the model are: leadership practice; leadership dispositions; leadership approaches; individual factors; and, contextual factors.

At the centre of the model is leadership practice, the manifestation of leadership as practice as described by Youngs (2017). As described in Section 6.3.2 above, I am proposing the six key components of higher education leadership practice as: vision; values and culture; strategic planning; building and resourcing the team; regional contribution; and, representation.

The horizontal axis in Figure 6.1 describes the leadership processes. Behind leadership practices, lie the leadership dispositions of presidents, as discussed in some detail in Section 6.3.3 above. These go to the core of leadership character and personality. The four facets of leadership dispositions I am proposing are: integrity; decisiveness; passion and, clear and open communications. Leadership practice then manifests itself in different leadership approaches. As put forward in Section 6.3.4 above, the four leadership approaches I am proposing are: collegiate leadership; distributed leadership; situational leadership; and transformational leadership.

Figure 6.1: An Integrative Model of Higher Education Leadership

The vertical axis of the model describes the individual and contextual factors which mediate leadership practice. While this study investigated the influence of many individual factors, the three dominant ones were discipline, scholarship and gender. The final part of the model proposes contextual factors. By definition, contextual factors will be situationally or contextually dependent. However, the three elements identified in this study are framed as more general themes, in order that they may have wider application. These three elements are: higher education context; the funding model and the teaching-research nexus. While these will have different manifestations in various higher education settings, at a high level they describe the categories of contextual factors that may be capable of being applied in other higher education settings.

This conceptual model makes an original contribution to knowledge, by proposing an integrative model of leadership as advocated by Yukl (2010) and Avolio (2007). This model is proposed as a frame within which to understand and study leadership in higher education. While the elements of the model are derived from the study of presidents from one higher education setting, at a particular point in time, the model deliberately uses more generic terms to describe those factors. The reason for this is so that the model has the potential to apply in many other higher education contexts.

6.6 Summary

This chapter synthesises the findings from this study into five overarching themes; these themes form the basis for a proposed conceptual model of higher education leadership. The chapter began by exploring the socio-professional characteristics of presidents. Thereafter, leadership was disaggregated into the thematic areas of leadership practice, leadership disposition and leadership approach, and sub-themes within each of these were identified. In section 6.4 the mediating influence of contextual factors was explored. All of these were then brought together to form an integrative model of higher education leadership which is proposed in Section 6.5 above.

Chapter Seven

Conclusions and Implications

7.1 Introduction

The chapter begins with an assessment of the contribution of this study to leadership research: knowledge, policy and practice. This is followed by my reflections on the research process and the research journey. Finally, this chapter concludes by surfacing the main limitations of this study and makes some suggestions for future research.

7.2 Contribution of Research

7.2.1 Contribution to New Knowledge

This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge by proposing a new conceptual model of higher education leadership. The proposed conceptual framework represents an integrative approach to higher education leadership, but does not claim to be an all-inclusive model. The conceptual relationships between leadership practice and leadership dispositions and approaches require further research, which should lead to further refinement of the model. The framework holds potential for advancing theoretical understanding of the mediating role of individual and contextual factors on leadership.

This study makes an important contribution to what Esen, Bellibas and Gumus (2020) and Badillo-Vega; Krücken and Pineda (2019) describe as a relatively limited literature in the area of leadership in higher education. This research applies models from the broader leadership literature to the specific context of higher education and in so doing will make a contribution to the existing body of knowledge on leadership in higher education.

The proposed integrative model of higher education leadership includes five key elements: leadership practice; leadership dispositions; leadership approaches; individual factors; and, contextual factors. This model adopts an integrative approach to the study of leadership as advocated by Yukl (2010) and Avolio (2007), incorporating trait, behavioural and situational approaches. This is perhaps the most significant contribution of this study as

most current theories have inadequate explanatory processes and fail to sufficiently address situational processes or context (Yukl 2010). From a methodological perspective this study also makes an important contribution in that it moves away from the reliance of many leadership studies on surveys and make greater use of qualitative methods, which Badillo-Vega, Krücken and Pineda (2019) argue is more relevant for the empirical study of presidential leadership.

This research explores the unique context of higher education in Ireland, with the potential for interesting cross-cultural comparisons. The proposed conceptual model may also be transferable to other higher education environments, given that at least some of these contextual factors also pertain in other higher education settings. This research will help narrow the gap in the literature on Irish higher education and is academically important in providing a national level of understanding and analysis of the importance of contextual influences on higher education leadership. The fact that this represents a full sample of all of the presidents in institutes of technology gives it greater weight and will lead to a new and deep understanding of the meaning and conduct of leadership among presidents in institutes of technology in Ireland at a critical point in time. The research has implications for improving the practice of leadership among senior managers in higher education and for recruitment and training strategies for leaders.

More broadly, this research will contribute to increasing the body of knowledge and interest in higher education leadership research among researchers, practitioners and policy makers as advocated by Esen, Bellibas and Gumus (2020) who argue that providing more research-based evidence of the importance of leadership will generate more interest in leadership studies.

7.2.2 Contribution to Policy and Recommendations for Policy

This study contributes to the debate on higher education policy in Ireland. It is important to reflect on the insights gleaned into the future leadership directions for the technological higher education sector, and in particular for leaders of technological universities. In this study, leadership of an IOT was perceived as differing from leadership in a traditional

university in Ireland; these differences can be distilled down to three main themes: regional focus; resources, and institutional autonomy. Findings from this study would point to a need to revisit a number of key policy areas, including: higher education system configuration; higher education cluster model; and presidential appointments

Higher education system configuration

Once the current wave of TUs have been established, it would be timely to review the implementation of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*. This should include a review of the role and position of any remaining institutes of technology and other smaller specialist HEIs. The possibility of further consolidation of the higher education sector, including the further consolidation of the expected 12 universities, should be considered in the medium term.

Higher education clusters

The model of higher education clusters should be reviewed by the HEA. The model of regional higher education clusters was developed in advance of technological universities coming into being. In its current form it is no longer fit for purpose and should be revisited. The composition and purpose of clusters should be reviewed and the cluster model either transformed or terminated.

Appointment of presidents

Policy in respect of tenure of presidents needs to be revisited. Based on the insights provided by respondents in this study, I would recommend that contracts for presidents in the technological higher education sector should be for a period of seven years, with the possibility of a further year extension for between three and five years. The words of one of the presidents emphasise why this is important:

> A ten-year term is long enough for the individual and long enough for the organisation. I think it's good to have churn and to have new people coming through, new blood.

The importance of the level of scholarly expertise of the president is likely to be greater in the future, given its potential to have an impact on the university's performance as indicated, for example, by Goodall (2009). Research track record, scholarship and a track record of external engagement will likely become increasingly important in future presidential appointment criteria.

7.2.3 Contribution to Practice

This study offers unique insights into leadership practice among presidents in the technological higher education sector in Ireland. It is the only study of its kind of leaders in the sector and represents a unique contribution to understanding leadership of a higher education environment in transition from a binary structure. There is significant learning therein for individual leaders, for HEIs and for the collective.

Presidents

The findings from this study in relation to leadership practice were particularly significant. For current, and aspiring, leaders useful insights are provided into leadership practices, highlighting the importance of the key domains of: vision; values and culture; strategic planning; building the team; regional contribution; and representation. There is also an onus on presidents themselves to address their own leadership capacity, a weakness highlighted by Thorn (2018):

> A lack of strategic leadership and management capacity has seriously blunted the ability of some of the institutes to manage themselves through the years of austerity. (p. 191)

In relation to external engagement and external orientation, presidents will be required to have a greater focus on engagement at a national and international level, while retaining their unique relevance and role within their region.

Technological higher education institutions

In this study there was an evident tension arising from expectations about a higher degree of leadership and autonomy within a more regulated environment. Shattock (2013) similarly described an acceleration of change in the ways in which UK universities are governed and managed. He highlighted: an increased focus and dependence on the executive; the reorganisation of academic structures; the growth of the managerial team; and, the centralisation of decision-making. The current discrepancy between the autonomy of IOTs and traditional universities was emphasised in the quote below from one of the presidents:

> The autonomy that universities have which institutes of technology don't have. … Universities in general value their autonomy and culture. … So in a way a president of a university sees himself as the guardian of the culture of that university.

This is likely to become more pointed as technological universities become established. Related to this, institutional resourcing and structures will have to be realigned to reflect the very different reality of being a technological university.

Technological higher education sector

An important finding from this study was the virtual absence of any form of leadership training or mentoring for presidents. This resonates with Hempsall's (2014) finding that there was an inconsistency of preparation for leadership roles among respondents. One of the presidents in this study reflected on the implications of this:

> I've seen presidents put into institutions here in the last ten years in Ireland, had they been given a bit of management development training in the early stages, they could have made a huge difference to their institution and to them personally.

Given that only eight out of the 14 had undertaken management or leadership training since taking office, it raises questions about how to develop leadership capacity through training and mentoring. Most of the presidents indicated that little or no leadership training was

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available to them as presidents. There is an increased need for leadership development in higher education as suggested by Liu (2019) and I would recommended that the higher education sector works collectively to provide a formal mentoring programme for new presidents, using experienced current, or recently retired, presidents. Formal leadership training programmes should be developed to meet the specific needs of senior higher education leaders. Particular consideration should be given to availing of mentoring from presidents from outside of the jurisdiction. This is particularly significant in the context of the development of new technological universities of a much greater scale and complexity.

A strong representative body will be needed to manage the balance between collective leadership and competing institutional needs. In this study, there was a recognition of a weakness around shaping national policy, a sentiment expressed by one of the presidents in the quote below:

> As a sector it's one of the areas where we have been most weak. We haven't driven policy. … And we haven't been good at influencing or shaping the political landscape in terms of higher education.

The relationship between the new TUs and traditional universities (and the Irish Universities Association) will require careful and skilful management. At the core of this, however rests the competitive tensions which make collective leadership so challenging. As articulated by one of the presidents, this has to be acknowledged:

> Accepting that [competition] would actually be a major step forward and then saying, "Okay, you know, we are in competition with each other as institutions." as whatever else, but yet there are national issues that we need to work on and let's work on the national issues as opposed to pretend that they we all need to be best buddies on all things because we just aren't and we never will be.

The debate over whether Irish universities are best represented by one or two representative bodies has some way to go, but having two different bodies speaking for one relatively small higher education system, will become increasingly difficult to justify.

7.3 Research Reflections

My research idea has evolved significantly since this work began. Perhaps the biggest change has been in the proposed methodology. At the outset, I was intent on using an action research methodology. As a then head of school, this had much appeal in terms of access and the potential for reflective practice, but these advantages had to be balanced against significant, though not insurmountable, ethical issues, challenges of publication and the potential limitations of undertaking insider research. As I reflected on my original motivations for undertaking the EdD, I recognised that my intellectual curiosity and personal and professional development would be best served by studying the overall leaders within the organisation (presidents), rather than heads of faculty as initially envisaged. This necessitated a different research approach, while still residing within a qualitative research paradigm.

The research questions and indeed the title of the study evolved over the course of this research, influenced in the early stages by the literature and laterally when framing the interview questions. Indeed the final research questions and sub-questions were modified right up to the end of the process of analysis and write-up. This truly was an iterative process involving both major changes and subtle refinements. I had not envisaged the extent of this at the outset.

One of the biggest challenge in this thesis was in organising a vast literature and attempting to tease out the key debates and arguments within the constraints of a single, word count constrained, literature review. In the end, I decided to separate out the higher education landscape from the leadership literature and present them as two separate chapters.

I found managing the vast amount of data I had collected and assembling and sorting the data for analysis somewhat challenging. The first phase of data familiarisation and initial coding was all done manually – lots of thinking and messy writing and notes. The initial phase of analysis (Chapter 5) was exceptionally time consuming; however once the key themes were documented, the further synthesis and higher order abstracting to form a conceptual model (Chapter 6), was intellectually much more stimulating.

The most enjoyable aspect of undertaking this study was the fieldwork. While many researchers find the fieldwork challenging, I thoroughly enjoyed the engagement with the 14 presidents and gained really interesting insights into leadership personalities, subtle yet fascinating nuggets of learning, which I have gleaned from spending hours with this group of leaders and which I believe will benefit me personally and professionally into the future.

The structure of the EdD programme at the School of Education, with its alternating workshops on education and methodology and structured deadlines, was helpful in guiding me to complete the doctoral thesis. The process of articulating and debating my research ideas through conference papers and doctoral colloquia has helped shape my final approach to the research, especially clarification of issues around data collection.

In reflecting on the doctoral journey I also have to reflect on changes in life and work over the same period. The biggest challenge in completing this work was in balancing the time between personal, family and professional demands and commitments. Our child was born during that period and in my professional life I have moved from being head of school to taking on the role of vice-president for academic affairs and registrar. And all the while, the higher education landscape in Ireland continues to shift, with the creation of three new technological universities and advanced plans for two more. Indeed on the very week I submitted this thesis for examination, I am meeting with the international panel which is formally considering the application for TU status from the Connacht Ulster Alliance TU consortium that I have been part of since 2012.

7.4 Limitations and Areas for Future Research

7.4.1 Limitations

Few studies can claim to be without limitations and the conduct of research typically involves decisions and trade-offs in terms of the choice of research methods and their implementation. The main limitations associated with this study relate to the scope of the research and the nature of self-reporting. These are each addressed in turn below.

The main limitations of this study relate to the scope of the research. The research is based exclusively on presidents in institutes of technology in Ireland at an historical point in time and does not explicitly address leadership in other HEIs within Ireland, nor does it draw on cross-cultural or transnational analysis. It does not purport to address other forms of HEI, such as traditional universities or private higher education providers, or HEIs outside of Ireland, other than in contextualising leadership in the institutes of technology. The focus of the research, and of all the research questions, is on the overall leader of the organisation. The leadership roles of heads of school, heads of department and others in senior leadership positions are not explicitly addressed, and where they are it is through the lens of the president. While recognising that middle leadership in higher education is under-explored both theoretically and empirically (Branson, Franken and Penney 2016), the focus for this study is on the overall leader of the institution, the president. Furthermore, while it would have been interesting to look at how the meaning or conduct of leadership might differ in the basic units (such as taught programmes and research groups) compared to that at management level, that is not the focus of this research.

This study of leadership is from the perspective of the leaders themselves and does not address leadership as perceived by followers. Avolio, Walumba and Weber (2009b, p. 434) argue that: "perhaps one of the most interesting omissions in theory and research on leadership is the absence of discussions of followership and its impact on leadership". Avolio (2007) similarly reported that most leadership research has either ignored the role or followers or has considered them to be passive.

While acknowledging the limitations of the scope of this research, therein also lies its strength. Focusing on this group of leaders allows for an in-depth study of leadership among leaders whom are currently under-researched and a sector which is going through a unique process of structural change which will result in a new set of organisations, of an entirely different structure and scale. This study does not purport to be a universal leadership study that applies to all types of situations, rather adopts an approach that applies to the specific context under study, while aiming to contribute to the broader field of leadership research in higher education.

The limitations of self-reporting must also be acknowledged. This study does not include comparison of perceptions (self-reports) with public pronouncements, published policies and strategies or perceptions of other management or academic staff or fellow presidents. This research is based on self-reports of leaders rather than 'objective' judgements of leadership qualities and leadership effectiveness as defined, for example, by a panel of experts or triangulated through questioning others in the organisation. On balance, my judgement was that the likely resistance from respondents to this, with a corresponding threat to both access to, and openness of, leaders would more than outweigh any potential benefits accruing. Self-reports are used in many leadership studies. For example, in a major survey of over 500 people in leadership roles in 20 Australian universities, Scott et al. (2008) elicited self-reports on the capabilities that are perceived as most important for effective performance.

I was conscious of the potential limitations at all stages of the research process, from entry to the field and negotiation with respondents, to analysis, writing up and dissemination. On the other hand, Carr (2000) defends partisanship but explains this is because of researchers' theoretical commitments:

(a) In so far as educational research aspires to offer something more than a random collection of primitive 'facts' it cannot avoid being partisan. Those who denounce educational research on the grounds of its partisanship are therefore simply failing to recognise the extent to which educational research always involves a commitment to certain normative beliefs.

(b) The reason why educational research is partisan is not because the motives of individual researchers can, either accidentally or intentionally, intrude into the conduct of their work. Rather, it is because the research methodologies they employ necessarily incorporate a latent commitment to some normative educational theory. (pp. 440-441)

It was important that I recognised and acknowledged my own positionality within his research; on the one hand accepting that I was not engaging with the study as a neutral bystander, and on the other hand using that insider knowledge, to gain access, build trust and realise an elevated level of engagement with respondents. This study was conducted at

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a unique time in the transition of one form of HEI (IOTs) to a new form (TUs). This research was undertaken before the TU legislation was passed, while all of the really interesting issues and uncertainties pertained. Once the Technological Universities Act (2018) was passed, this was followed by a period of accelerated change, which would have severely curtailed both the opportunities for access and the quality and nature of the engagement with presidents.

7.4.2 Areas for Future Research

While no claims of generalisability are made here, the proposed model had the potential to apply to other higher education contexts. It would be useful to investigate it application in higher education settings of similar scale or stage of evolution. The conceptual model requires further testing and refining to see whether it has applicability in other higher education institutions or in different international contexts.

It would be useful to undertake follow-up research to triangulate leaders' perceptions of leadership practices with those of other senior managers within the institutions or with the broader academic and professional service staff. While this study focused on senior leaders, involving a wider group of stakeholders would add greater depth to these findings.

Within Ireland, it would be useful to replicate this research following the establishment of five new technological universities and extend it to include presidents in traditional universities.

7.5 Conclusion

The chapter brings the thesis to a conclusion, highlighting the contribution of this study to new knowledge, to policy and to practice. This was followed by my reflections on the research process and the research journey. Finally, this chapter concluded by identifying the main limitations of the study and made some suggestions for future research.

This thesis set out to answer three important research questions: what is the profile of leaders in the technological higher education sector in and how do the professional characteristics of presidents impact on leadership?; what are presidents' approaches to leadership within and beyond the organisation?; and how are leadership practices influenced by contextual factors? Based on a study of all 14 presidents of the institutes of technology in Ireland, an integrative model of higher education leadership is proposed. The proposed model includes five key elements: leadership practice; leadership dispositions; leadership approaches; individual factors; and, contextual factors. This conceptual model will make an important contribution to the understanding of leadership and to the field of higher education leadership research.

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Appendix 1: Universities, Technological Universities and Institutes of Technology in the Republic of Ireland

Universities
University College Dublin (UCD)
University College Cork (UCC)
National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG)
Trinity College, Dublin (TCD)
Maynooth University (MU)
Dublin City University (DCU)
University of Limerick (UL)

Technological Universities and Institutes of Technology

Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin) – formed by the merger of three former IOTs in 2019:
       Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT)
       Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown (ITB)
       Institute of Technology, Tallaght (IT Tallaght)

Munster Technological University (MTU) – formed by the merger of two former IOTs in 2021:
       Cork Institute of Technology (CIT)
       Institute of Technology, Tralee (IT Tralee)

Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest – formed by the merger of two former IOTs in 2021:
       Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT)
       Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT)

Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT)
Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT)
Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT)
Institute of Technology, Carlow (IT Carlow)
Institute of Technology, Sligo (IT Sligo)
Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT)
Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT)

Appendix 2: Functions of Institutes of Technology (Regional Technical Colleges Act (1992))

a) to provide such courses of study as the governing body of the college considers appropriate;

b) to enter into arrangements with the National Council for Educational Awards, with any university in the State or with any other authority approved by the Minister from time to time for the purpose of having degrees, diplomas, certificates or other educational awards conferred, granted or given and to make such other arrangements as may be approved by the Minister from time to time for this purpose;

c) subject to such conditions as the Minister may determine, to engage in research, consultancy and development work and to provide such services in relation to these matters as the governing body of the college considers appropriate;

d) to enter into arrangements with other institutions in or outside the State for the purpose of offering joint courses of study and of engaging jointly in programmes of research, consultancy and development work in relation to such matters as the governing body of the college considers appropriate;

e) subject to such conditions as the Minister may determine, to enter into arrangements, including participation in limited liability companies, to exploit any research, consultancy or development work undertaken by a college either separately or jointly;

f) to institute and, if thought fit, to award scholarships, prizes and other awards;

g) to maintain, manage, administer and invest all the money and assets of the college;

h) to accept gifts of money, land or other property upon such trusts and conditions, if any, as may be specified by the donors: provided that nothing in any such trust or condition is contrary to the provisions of this Act;

i) subject to the approval of the Minister, to acquire land;

j) to do all such acts and things as may be necessary to further the objects and development of the college.

Appendix 3: Objects and Functions of Universities (Universities Act (1997))

Objects of universities:

a) to advance knowledge through teaching, scholarly research and scientific investigation,

b) to promote learning in its student body and in society generally,

c) to promote the cultural and social life of society, while fostering and respecting the diversity of the university's traditions,

d) to foster a capacity for independent critical thinking amongst its students,

e) to promote the official languages of the State, with special regard to the preservation, promotion and use of the Irish language and the preservation and promotion of the distinctive cultures of Ireland,

f) to support and contribute to the realisation of national economic and social development,

g) to educate, train and retrain higher level professional, technical and managerial personnel,

h) to promote the highest standards in, and quality of, teaching and research,

i) to disseminate the outcomes of its research in the general community,

j) to facilitate lifelong learning through the provision of adult and continuing education, and

k) to promote gender balance and equality of opportunity among students and employees of the university.

Functions of universities:

(a) shall provide courses of study, conduct examinations and award degrees and other qualifications,

(b) shall promote and facilitate research,

(c) may establish by incorporation in the State or elsewhere, or participate in the establishment of, such trading, research or other corporations as it thinks fit for

the purpose of promoting or assisting, or in connection with the functions of, the university,

(d) may collaborate with educational, business, professional, trade union, Irish language, cultural, artistic, community and other interests, both inside and outside the State, to further the objects of the university,

(e) shall maintain, manage and administer, and may dispose of and invest, the property, money, assets and rights of the university,

(f) may collaborate with graduates, convocations of graduates and with associations representing graduates of the university both inside and outside the State,

(g) may purchase or otherwise acquire, hold and dispose of land or other property, and

(h) may accept gifts of money, land or other property on the trusts and conditions, if any, not in conflict with this Act, specified by the donor.

Appendix 4: Sample Contract of Employment – Institute of Technology President

1.   <u>**Parties**</u> :

   Employee:

   Employer: Institute of Technology

                                                      (Hereinafter called 'the Institute')

2.   **Post:**   **President**

3.   **Date of commencement:**

4.   **Nature of position:**

   This is a full-time fixed-term contract appointment of five years duration or until the end of the academic year in which the appointee reaches the age of sixty-five years whichever is the earlier.

   The provisions of the Institutes of Technology Acts, 1992-2006 and any subsequent Acts replacing or amending these Acts and any orders and regulations made under these Acts will apply.

   The Education Sector Superannuation Scheme (formerly included in the Local Government Superannuation Scheme) will apply as provided for in Section 11(8) of the Regional Technical Colleges Acts 1992 as adapted by the Education Sector Superannuation Scheme (Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions) Order 2001 (SI number 14 of 2001). The provisions of the Public Service Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2004 apply to the post.

   The Unfair Dismissals Acts, 1977-2005 shall not apply to a dismissal consisting only of the expiry of the period of this fixed-term contract.

5.   **Duties**

   In accordance with Section 9 of the Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992 and the Institutes of Technology Act 2006, the President shall be the Chief Officer of the institute.

   The duties of the appointee shall be the duties provided for the office of Director in the Regional Technical Colleges Acts 1992 -1999 and any subsequent Acts replacing or amending these Acts and any other duties in accordance with collective agreements arrived at and in force from time to time and authorised by the Minister for Education and Skills.

6. Probationary period

A probationary period of at least one year will apply to this post. At the end of that year, the appointee may be confirmed in his/her appointment, continued on probation for a further period or at any time during the probationary period the appointment may be terminated.

The appointee will be advised on his/her performance during the probationary period and will be given not less than one month's notice of any extension or termination.

7. Resignation

The appointee may terminate this appointment on not less than three months notice in writing.

8. Suspension/Discipline/Dismissal

The Institute shall have the power to suspend the appointee, to impose disciplinary sanctions on the appointee and to terminate the appointment in accordance with such disciplinary/dismissal procedures as are collectively agreed and in force from time to time and subject to the Institutes of Technology Acts, 1992 to 2006 and any other applicable employment legislation.

9. External Activity

Any external activity engaged in by the appointee must not be such as to interfere with the fulfilling of the appointee's duties and responsibilities to the institute. Any external employment, self-employment, working partnerships or consultancy work entered into by the appointee must not conflict with the interests of the institute and must have the prior approval of the Governing Body. Approval may be given where this activity is deemed by the institute not to interfere with the fulfilling of the appointee's duties and responsibilities to the institute and/or where the activity is deemed not to interfere with the interests of the institute.

Any approval/refusal will be subject to ongoing review by the institute.

10. Remuneration

The remuneration of this post will be as authorised by the Minister for Education and Skills from time to time.

Payments will be made monthly in arrears.

11. Sick Leave

Sick leave will be granted to the appointee in accordance with the arrangements and subject to the conditions authorised by the Minister for Education and Science.

12. Annual Leave

The President shall be entitled to thirty two days annual leave, exclusive of public holidays. Leave will be taken having regard to the institute's business.

13. Maternity/Paternity/Adoptive Leave

Maternity/paternity/adoptive leave will be granted to the appointee in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions and arrangements authorised by the Minister.

14. Confidentiality

The institute is obliged to maintain confidentiality in certain aspects of its work. It is the duty of the appointee to observe such confidentiality. This restriction shall continue to apply after termination of employment.

15. Intellectual property

Any discovery or invention or secret process or improvement in procedure made or discovered by the appointee while discharging his/her duties in relation to this post is the property of the institute or of such companies as the institute may nominate for this purpose. Without prejudice to this position, an agreed protocol will govern the rights of the appointee which will give due recognition and reward to the appointee.

16. Academic freedom

The institute recognises that the principle of academic freedom is essential for the achievement of the institute's functions.

17. Declarations and signatures

I have read and fully understand the foregoing Contract of Employment and I agree to abide by the terms of this contract and further warrant that all statements and representations which I have made to the institute in application for this appointment are true and correct.

Signed: _____ **Date:**
    (appointee)

Signed: _____ **Date:**
    (on behalf of the institute)

Appendix 5: Section 28 of Technological Universities Act (2018) – Eligibility Criteria

28. (1) The applicant institutes concerned shall, in relation to an application for an order under section 36, jointly comply with the following criteria (in this chapter referred to as "eligibility criteria"):

(a) of the students of the applicant institutes registered on a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level—

> (i) at least 4 per cent are research students registered on a programme which leads to an award to at least masters degree level, and
> (ii) at least 30 per cent fall within one or more than one of the following classes of students:

>> (I) students who are registered on a programme that is provided on a flexible basis, such as by means of part-time, online or distance learning;

>> (II) students who are registered on a programme that has been designed, and is being delivered, with the involvement (which shall be construed in accordance with subsection (2)(b)), of business, enterprise, the professions, the community, local interests and other related stakeholders in the region in which the campuses of the applicant institutes are located;

>> (III) students who are not less than 23 years of age;

(b) the applicant institutes have a plan that demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the advisory panel, that they would have capacity, as a technological university to increase within 10 years of the date of the making of an order under section 36, from at least 4 per cent to at least 7 per cent, the proportion of their research students referred to in paragraph (a)(i);

(c) of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the provision of a programme that leads to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level—

> (i) at least 90 per cent hold a masters degree or doctoral degree,

> (ii) at least 45 per cent hold—

>> (I) a doctoral degree, or

>> (II) subject to subparagraph (iii), a terminal degree, as well as sufficient practical experience gained in the practice of a profession to which the programme relates, such that the degree and experience together can reasonably be viewed by the advisory panel as equivalent to a doctoral degree,

> and

(iii) not more than 10 per cent hold only the qualifications referred to in subparagraph (ii)(II);

(d) the applicant institutes have a plan that demonstrates, to the satisfaction of the advisory panel, that they would have capacity, as a technological university, to increase, within 10 years of the date of the making of an order under section 36, from at least 45 per cent to at least 65 per cent, the proportion of their full-time academic staff referred to in paragraph (c)(ii);

(e) of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in both of the following, at least 80 per cent hold a doctoral degree—

    (i) the provision of a programme that leads to an award at doctoral degree level, and

    (ii) the conduct of research;

(f) each of the full-time academic staff of the applicant institutes engaged in the supervision of students registered on a programme that leads to an award to doctoral degree level—

    (i) holds—

        (I) a doctoral degree, or

        (II) a terminal degree, as well as sufficient practical experience gained in the practice of a profession to which the programme relates, such that the degree and experience together can reasonably be viewed by the advisory panel as equivalent to a doctoral degree,

    and

    (ii) has a record of continued conduct of research in an area relevant to the programme;

(g) in respect of not less than 3 fields of education—

    (i) the applicant institutes provide programmes that lead to awards to doctoral degree level, and

    (ii) the academic staff and students of the applicant institutes conduct research;

(h) in relation to a programme referred to in paragraph (g), the applicant institutes demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the advisory panel—

    (i) that they carry out innovation activity and conduct research to a high standard, and

    (ii) that the innovation and research has positive social and economic effects on business, enterprise, the professions, the community, local interests and other

related stakeholders in the region in which the campuses of the applicant institutes are located;

(i) all programmes provided by the applicant institutes that lead to an award to doctoral degree level comply with any policy relating to doctoral education as may be agreed from time to time between An tÚdarás and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority of Ireland following consultation with bodies representing the interests of an institute, a technological university or a university specified in paragraphs (a) to (d) of section 4 (1) of the Universities Act 1997;

(j) the applicant institutes have a plan that demonstrates to the satisfaction of the advisory panel that they would have capacity, as a technological university to increase within 5 years of the date of the making of an order under section 36 , from at least 3 to at least 5, the fields of education referred to in paragraph (g);

(k) the applicant institutes demonstrate to the satisfaction of the advisory panel that the applicant institutes have, at the time they apply under section 29 for an order under section 36 , the capacity to effectively perform the functions of a technological university and in particular demonstrate —

> (i) that they have integrated, coherent and effective governance structures in place concerning academic, administrative and management matters,

> (ii) that they have strong links with business, enterprise, the professions, the community, local interests and other stakeholders in the region in which the campuses of the applicant institutes are located,

> (iii) that they have, under section 28 of the Act of 2012, established procedures in writing for quality assurance in relation to which—

>> (I) no notice has been furnished by the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority of Ireland under section 36(1) of the Act of 2012, or

>> (II) approval has not been withdrawn under section 36 of that Act,

> (iv) that they develop, and have procedures in place to further develop programmes that respond to the needs of business, enterprise, the professions, the community, local interests and other related stakeholders in the region in which the campuses of the applicant institutes are located,

> (v) that they —

>> (I) provide opportunities for staff and students of the applicant institutes to teach, learn or conduct research at institutions that provide higher education outside the State, or to obtain relevant work experience outside the State,

(II) provide opportunities for staff and students of institutions that provide higher education outside the State to teach, learn or conduct research at the applicant institutes, and

(III) collaborate with institutions that provide higher education outside the State, including on joint research projects and for the purpose of provision of programmes;

(l) that they develop and promote and if an order is made under section 36 have procedures in place to further develop and promote, as a technological university, strong social and cultural links, and links supporting creativity, between the technological university and the community in the region in which the campuses of the technological university will be located.

(2) (a) In this section—

"award" means an award that is recognised within the Framework;

"credit" has the same meaning as it has in section 56 of the Act of 2012;

"field of education" means a field of education described as a narrow field of education in the International Standard Classification of Education being the classification for the time being adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation;

"level" means recognised at the level concerned within the Framework;

"programme" means programme of education and training;

"research student" means a student who is registered on a programme of education and training where not less than 60 per cent of the available credits are assigned in respect of a thesis or theses prepared by the student based on research conducted by him or her.

(b) For the purposes of subparagraph (ii)(II) of subsection (1)(a), "involvement" in relation to a programme may include—

(i) developing, with one or, as the case may be, more than one of the applicant institutes concerned, the curriculum of the programme,

(ii) contributing to assessment, as required by the programme, of the progress of a student, or

(iii) providing a work placement for a student registered on the programme.

(c) A reference, in paragraph (c), (e) or (f) of subsection (1)—

(i) to a masters or doctoral degree held by a member of staff of the applicant institutes is a reference to a degree awarded to masters or doctoral level within the Framework and if not awarded within the Framework is, to the satisfaction of the advisory panel, equivalent to such a degree, or

(ii) to a terminal degree held by a member of staff of the applicant institutes is a reference to an award to at least honours bachelor degree level within the Framework which, in the view of the advisory panel, was at the time the award was made the highest academic award available in the discipline concerned, and if not so awarded within the Framework is, to the satisfaction of the advisory panel, equivalent to such a degree.

Appendix 6: Correspondence to participants

Re: Research Study leading to the Degree of Doctor of Education at the University of Sheffield.
Project title: 'Presidential Leadership in Higher Education'.

Dear xxx,

I would like to ask for your assistance in my work towards the Degree of Doctor of Education at the University of Sheffield. I would be grateful if you were willing to participate in an interview with me on the topic of Presidential Leadership in Higher Education.

If you are willing to participate in an interview I will travel to meet with you in xxx on a date which suits you. The proposed face-to-face interview would last for 1-1.5 hours and would, with your permission, be recorded. The recordings made during this research will be used only for analysis and for illustration in any conference presentations. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. All the information that I collect during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. This project has been ethically approved via the ethics review procedure of the School of Education, University of Sheffield. If you have any concerns regarding the research or the conduct of the proposed interview you may contact my Research Supervisor: Professor Gareth Parry, School of Education, University of Sheffield (g.w.parry@sheffield.ac.uk).

I would be extremely grateful if you could take the time to participate in this research and please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information (E-mail: billy.bennett@lyit.ie; Tel: 087 2697381).

Kind regards,
Billy Bennett,
Registrar, Letterkenny Institute of Technology.

Appendix 7: Participant consent statement

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project, participation in which is entirely voluntary. The project involves a study of leadership among Presidents in Institutes of Technology in Ireland and the study aims to include all Presidents.

This interview will last for an hour or so and will, with your permission, be recorded. The recordings made during this research will be used only for analysis and for illustration in any conference presentations. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

All the information that I collect during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. While it is anticipated that parts of this research will be submitted for publication in academic journals, you will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications. During the analysis and write-up stage, data will be anonymised and a separate encrypted file kept with the key to the identity of participants. This project has been ethically approved via the ethics review procedure of the School of Education, University of Sheffield.

Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this research. Do you have any questions before we formally begin the interview?

Appendix 8: Interview schedule

Section 1 – Profile of President

Name of President:	
Institute of Technology:	
Date of interview:	
Venue:	
Date commenced as President (in this IOT) Month/Year: Date finished (if applicable) Month/Year:	
Previous roles as President (any other IOT/University) Organisation: Month/Year to Month/Year:	
When commenced full-time career in IOT Sector Month/Year:	
Previous full-time roles in IOT Sector: (Lecturer; SL; HoD; HoS; Registrar; Head of Dev.; SFC; other)	
Most recent previous external job/role (prior to entering IOT sector): Organisation: Role: Month/Year to Month/Year:	
Discipline of first/undergraduate degree:	
Highest degree and discipline:	

Section 2 – Leadership role of the President

Overall, what do you see as the role of the President in an IOT? How different is the role to that of a President in a University?

What's your view on the title President versus the original titles of Principal or Director? Any significance in terms of how a President is perceived internally? Externally?

What formal internal management and organisational structures are you part of in your organisation?

- Governing Body
- Academic Council (Chair?) Committees of Academic Council? Role/attendance
- Senior Management Team - Executive Board/Committee (Chair?)
- Broader management team (including middle managers)
- Union forum? Others?

How effective have these structures been? Have you changed these structures or how they work during your time as President?

What mechanisms do you use to communicate with academic and other staff? - formal meetings (frequency/format); Newsletter; Email, other.

How would a Head of Department in this college go about arranging a meeting with you? A lecturer?

How is your time divided between internal and external engagement?

Internally, how is your time divided between various activities (e.g. classic management functions - planning, organising, implementing, control)?

Is there any IOT President, past or present, you particularly admire? Why?

Is there any other leader in higher education in Ireland or internationally you particularly admire? Why?

Is there any other leader outside of education you particularly admire? Why?

What attributes do you believe are most important for effective leadership of an IOT?

Section 3 – Leadership within the organisation

How important is the President versus other Senior Managers as a factor in organisational effectiveness and performance? To what extent is the culture of this Institute reflective of your values as President?

Leadership literature describes a range of leadership styles – including transformational leadership, distributed leadership and hybrid/blended leadership. How would you describe your own leadership style as a President?

How would your senior managers describe your leadership style? Academic staff? Other staff?

Has your discipline (Business/Engineering/Science, etc.) shaped your leadership style? How?

Is this (discipline effect) evident among other Presidents in the sector?

Similarly, have the previous roles you have held shaped your leadership style? (Registrar, Head of Development, Head of School/Department, SFC)

I'm going to list some of the models of leadership form the literature. Any of these resonate with you?

Collegiate leadership	Transactional leadership	Transformational leadership
Collective leadership	Managerialist leadership	Remote/distant leadership
Hybrid management		

Can you think of an example of a successful major internal change project which you drove?

- Tell me about it - approach you took? How involved others? Why it worked?

Can you think of an example of a major internal change project which you tried but was less successful?

- Tell me about it - approach you took? How involved others? Why it didn't work?

What strengths do you bring to the role of President? Any weaknesses (feel free not to answer!)?

The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 identifies three core roles of higher education as being: Teaching and learning; Research; Engagement with wider society.

As President do you see your role or involvement as being different in each of these domains? How?

Section 4 - Leadership beyond the organisation

Do you see yourself a providing a leadership role beyond the Institute (or is it mainly confined to the Institute)?

- In the region? How?
- Nationally? How?
- Internationally? How?

Do you see a role for the President in shaping national policy (education/regional/industrial)?

- E.g., Department of Education and Skills and the Higher Education Authority
- Engagement with other public sector bodies and state agencies?
- Media? Others?

When Presidents come together as a collective (e.g., IOTI) how does leadership manifest itself?

- Does the rotating Chair of the Council of Presidents have a significant role?
- Is there one/a few leaders among Presidents? Who?
- How would your fellow Presidents describe your leadership style?

To what extent is leadership provided by IOTI?

Is there a need for a leadership organisation (similar to Leadership Foundation UK)?

Could IOTI (or a successor organisation) achieve this?

Section 5 - Leadership in different domains

It is arguable that the conditions for leadership in IOTs in Ireland are changing – what's your view?

What, if any, are the implications for leadership in the Institutes of:

- Austerity/budget cuts
- HEA's mission-based performance compact (seven elements)
- RGAM
- External performance measures (e.g., ISSE, u-Multirank)

Has the evolving higher education landscape reconfiguration resulted in the role of the Presidents becoming more outfacing? How does this manifest itself?

Has the prospect of re-designation as Technological Universities:

- Changed the nature of interactions among Presidents within your TU alliance (for those within a TU alliance)?
- Impacted on interactions among Presidents (for those outside a TU alliance)?
- Changed power relationships (already)?
- What are the implications for TU leadership post merger/re-designation?
- What are the implications for IOT leadership for Institutes outside of the TU re-designation process?

Have the new higher education clusters changed the nature of leader interactions within the regional cluster? Any impact on the nature of the engagement between University and IOT Presidents within the cluster?

Can you give me an example of a major challenge or issue within (either the alliance or) the regional cluster you are involved where you have played a significant role in making it work?

- Tell me about it Approach you took? How involved others? Why it worked?

Section 6 – Other Issues

What is available to a President in terms of either leadership training or mentoring? Have you availed of any? How can leadership capacity be developed?

Views on tenure of Presidents – 10 or 5 years? Multiple terms?

Gender – is it relevant for you? For other Presidents?

Views on the impact of the level of scholarly expertise (intellectual authority) of the President on leadership effectiveness?

Any difference in the absence of senior powerful professors compared to the situation that pertains in the Universities?

Can Presidents have multiple identities – e.g., intellectual or academic leadership versus management leadership?

I would like to have covered other issues around leadership capacity within the sector, particularly in the context of TU criteria. We didn't get to that – perhaps you have some views on it?

Thank you.

[Recorder off]

Off the record were there any final comments or observations you wished to make?