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University leadership development: lessons from Ukraine

Abstract

The article is a follow-up analysis of Ukraine Higher Education Leadership Development Programme that ran in Ukraine 2016 – 2019 and was a joint initiative of the British Council in Ukraine, United Kingdom Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, Institute of Higher Education of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine and Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. The article is rooted in insights, observations and reflections of Programme implementers and participants, as well as incorporates conclusions of the impact report put forward by an external evaluator of the Programme. The authors of the article conclude that university leadership is important for precipitating change at an individual, institutional and sectoral levels in Ukraine's higher education sector and that currently available resources and existing capacity in university leadership development within the sector are sufficient to sustain and advance university leadership development. The authors argue that shared leadership approach has proved its effectiveness during the Programme; they propose to further apply shared leadership as a means of responding to numerous challenges faced today by Ukraine's higher education sector.

In addition to review of lessons learnt from three phases of Programme implementation, the authors generate recommendations for advancement of university leadership at institutional and sectoral levels within Ukraine's higher education, like: unfolding discourse on university leadership at institutional and sub-institutional, sectoral and national levels; mainstreaming university leadership into all HEI activities, including teaching and learning, research, governance and management, student self-government, international cooperation etc.; facilitating inter-university cooperation, knowledge exchange and sharing; involving students into university leadership discourse and practice; launching a campaign to promote establishment of a privately funded foundation or endowment on university leadership development.

Key words: change agents, co-leaders, higher education, institutional strategy, shared leadership, university, values.

Relevance and problem setting

Leadership theme is popular among scholars and practitioners, in education sector and business. For different reasons, in Ukraine's higher education sector there is a significant interest in university leadership, which is confirmed by a number of studies published by Ukrainian scholars lately [Kalashnikova, 2017].

Several projects / programmes dedicated to university leadership emerged over the last decade. A Tempus project «Education for Leadership, Intelligence and Talent Encouraging» was launched in 2013 [Education for Leadership, Intelligence and Talen Encouraging]; it was initiated by the Institute of Higher Education of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine [Institute of Higher Education] and implemented in partnership with 7 Ukrainian HEIs, with a very broad dissemination throughout the sector. A conference on university leadership was held over three years [International conference «University and Leadership»], and a International academic journal «Universities and Leadership» was established [International Scientific Journal of

Universities and Leadership]. The Tempus project raised awareness of importance of university leadership theme, but did not satisfy the demand for enhancing university leadership through practical steps and measures.

A significant contribution to university leadership development was made by Ukraine Higher Education Leadership Development Programme that ran in 2016–2019 [Project]; it was a joint initiative of the British Council, UK Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE), Institute of Higher Education of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine (IHED), supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. The Programme was grounded in the concept of shared and distributed leadership [Bolden, Jones, Davis, Gentle, 2015].

While the journal «Universities and Leadership», annual conferences organized by IHED have provided the ground for academic discourse on university leadership, Ukraine Higher Education Leadership Development Programme made a significant contribution to implementation of research findings and testing shared leadership concept in practice [Impact Report, 2019].

On completion of the Programme, its participants, implementers, as well as its external evaluator have agreed that university leadership should be further advanced and enhanced in higher education sector. This conclusion is addressed to a whole range of external and internal stakeholders: officials of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, donors who fund education programmes, researchers, experts and civic activists engaged in the modernization and restructuring of higher education sector, but first all, to Ukrainian HEIs: their leaders and manages, academic and administrative staff, students.

The urgency in university leadership development is determined by several factors. Firstly, higher education sector operates under pressure of competition, national and international [Bologna Report, 2018]. Due to dramatic decrease of population in the 1990s and 2000s, the number of students has reduced. Many out of 282 UA universities suffer from low enrolment; the issue of university closures or mergers is higher on the list of priorities of higher education reform. Meanwhile, many European universities compete aggressively for international students, including Ukrainian students who give preference to international diplomas and opportunities to find a job in Europe. To survive and stay on the market of educational services, Ukrainian HEIs have to demonstrate excellence and leadership, enhance quality, adopt a rigorous marketing and internationalization strategies etc.

Secondly, change is the next challenge that UA HEIs face on a daily basis. Regular impulses for change come from Ukrainian Government's reforms, modernization of higher education sector in accordance with Bologna process and Ukraine's membership in European Higher Education Area; economic restructuring and labour market reorganization; aggression of the Russian Federation and hostilities in the East of Ukraine.

In order to respond to above challenges, HEIs do not only have to revise institutional strategies, adapt their organizational structures, review and amend curricula, update learning resources, design processes differently etc., but most importantly to generate new values. The enormity of tasks cannot be managed and accomplished by HEIs' leaders only and requires participation of all representatives of university community.

Thirdly, there is a growing awareness in Ukraine's higher education sector of importance of the social role of higher education and in this connection a pressure on HEIs to develop their leadership potential. From «ivory towers» [Gast, 2018] universities are transformed into drivers of social change, centres for community development, think-tanks for problem solving etc. This shift in perspective (HEIs' service to community, openness to the outer world) requires additional competences of HEIs' leaders and staff. Transformations in higher education sector and around it involve HEIs' internal and external stakeholders; managing transformational processes requires significant leadership capacity, that can be provided in the form of shared leadership.

Considering the above, this article aims to draw lessons from Ukraine Higher Education Leadership Development Programme and set the agenda for sustaining achieved changes and further advancing university leadership in Ukraine's higher education sector.

Research methods

A set of empirical methods was used for data accumulation: observation, discussion, reflection; for drawing conclusions and generating recommendation, content and discourse analysis, comparative analysis were used.

Research results

We start with analysis of achievements and lessons learnt from Ukraine Higher Education Leadership Development Programme.

The Programme was launched with the purpose to «develop a national cohort of change agents with the leadership skills to drive institutional and sector change» [Impact report, 2019, p. 2]. Participation in the Programme presupposed readiness and commitment of HEIs to implement an institutional development project in mixed vertical teams comprised of top university leaders (rector or vice-rector), mid-level managers, academic and / or administrative staff and students. Several components of the Programme: training sessions, a study visit to a UK university, networking, monitoring and dissemination events were to ensure that «individual development translates into institutional development» [Impact report, 2019, p. 2]. Totally, 300 change agents from 40 HEIs took part in the Programme, among them 49 top university leaders (rectors and vice-rectors), 191 mid-level managers and academic staff, 40 students and 20 facilitators; participants represented 17 cities from 14 regions of Ukraine.

The project was evaluated by an external evaluator Ms. Pat Killingley, and received a positive feedback. The evaluation expert noted that «Ukraine now has an important resource with potential to drive and lead change in critical areas of higher education reform» [Impact report, 2019, p. 5], with which most, if not all, programme participants agree.

Ukraine Higher Education Leadership Development Programme Impact Report indicated that project impact and success are mainly evaluated at the individual and team levels; meanwhile, for objective reasons changes at the institutional (university) level were only indirectly evaluated, even less so at the national level. Ukraine Higher Education Leadership Development Programme has made its impact at several levels (individual, team, institutional and national): «the Programme has delivered forty university teams with the knowledge, skills and experience to lead institutional change. These have the potential to intensify and extend change across other universities, gaining momentum and building critical mass in the sector. That potential now needs to be nurtured within the Ukraine sector to change it into reality» [Impact report, 2019, p. 35].

Drawing from external evaluation impact report, participants' feedback and reflection, personal observations of Programme progress, self-reflection and self-evaluation, we would like to contribute to the discussion on the results of Ukraine Higher Education Leadership Development Programme, including its impact and lessons learnt, as well as paving the way to sustaining changes in university leadership achieved by the Programme, extending and enhancing them at the institutional and sectoral levels.

As Programme «architects» and implementers, we agree with every word of the Programme Impact Report; at the same time, we would like to present our summary of «lessons learnt» drawn from our own reflections and observations:

1. The Programme has proved that university leadership theme is popular among UA HEIs: 177 applications for participation submitted over three years for 40 open vacancies testify to this.

2. The Programme has demonstrated that changes are possible in any HEI, in spite of its size or status. The Programme has provided numerous examples when smaller provincial universities' attainment was higher and more significant than in high-profile flagship HEIs. It is hardly possible to provide objective data in defence of this statement, especially in the short-term perspective. In our opinion, success of smaller, compact universities was due to stronger ties between university staff and management, and stronger cohesion within the institution, which are important markers of shared leadership [Impact report, 2019, p. 17].

3. In addition, the Programme has provided evidence that organizational (administrative) culture in HEIs can be changed rather fast on several conditions:

- there are incentives to do so (participation in the Programme was the incentive);
- there is an external pressure for change (the Programme demanded that in HEIs' vertical teams, students should mix with top university management – rectors or vice-rectors; during training sessions, the requirement was that students should speak before senior members of the team);
- other peers within the cohort also change their behaviour and demonstrate readiness to live by new rules.

4. The presence of the Rector on the team did not have a significant influence on the project achievements and access. Some teams led by Rectors did not accomplish much, at least during reporting stage and external evaluation stage of the Programme.

5. At each separate HEI, progress in leadership development and project success was rooted in regular, theoretically grounded factors; in other words, when university teams followed recommendations of trainers, their projects were likely to succeed.

6. In case of failure, the roots and causes of failure often went beyond the theory of distributed and shared leadership and were difficult to register and classify. Below we list some most notorious:

- Jealousy of a spouse working at the same HEIs (a husband or wife were jealous of his/ her spouse to whom new opportunities were opened due to participation in the Programme);
- Patriarchal (conservative) values, namely respect to age and loyalty (years of service); for example, to «Young Leaders» component of the Programme participating HEIs recommended staff with 25-30 years of service;
- Self-perception of a university: a HEI took part in the Programme not to learn about university leadership and master institutional transformations, but to demonstrate its accomplishments already achieved;
- Some participants (mainly, mid-level managers, like chairs, deans, deputy deans) were not granted by their HEIs such important resource as time, therefore, they were not able to visit all trainings and take part in all sessions.

In our opinion, to a larger extend, Programme's achievements and success are rooted in shared leadership approach, the rationale for which is explained below.

Shared leadership approach is appropriate in the times of change [Bolden, 2015, p. 4; Kezar, Holcombe, 2017, p. 1]. When the Programme was launched in 2016, Ukraine's' higher education sector was engaged in implementation of the new Law on Higher Education of 2014 [Zakon, 2014]. Many provisions of this Law were a novelty in Ukraine; their implementation, sometimes enforcement, required significant efforts of numerous actors, team work, collaboration between staff of different units and departments. For example, for the review of a study programme, academic staff who have developed and delivered the programme, are to be accompanied by students, graduates, current or potential employers. Or, development of higher education standards regulated by Article 10 of the above Law foresees that for development and adoption procedure different groups of external stakeholders are involved: Ministry of Education and

Sciences of Ukraine, scholars and academics employed by research institutions; experts and practitioners with sufficient experience who work at institutions other than those, where the standard was developed; representatives of employers' associations and enterprises leading in the sector.

The Law of 2014, following Bologna guidelines, has announced the quality of higher education its utmost priority, which encouraged Ukrainian HEIs to develop assurance systems, engage in quality dialogue and formation of quality culture, development of academic integrity codes or codes of ethics. While development of internal quality assurance systems involves dozens of university staff, enforcement of codes, compliance with quality rules and procedures requires commitment and mobilization of all employees, making many of them co-leaders in quality assurance. Ukraine Higher Education Leadership Development Programme, that was rooted in the shared leadership paradigm, has provided Ukrainian universities with tools to implement new provisions defined by the Law.

Shared leadership approach precipitates emergence of informal co-leaders in addition to formal, or positional leaders [Kezar, Holcombe, 2017, p.3; The Glossary of Education Reform]. This makes governance and leadership decisions, as well as managerial tasks easier for university top and mid-level managers, leaving them more time for strategic thinking, long-term planning, reflection and evaluation [The Glossary of Education Reform]. This also makes co-leaders happy, giving them «voice» more room for initiative, ownership, freedom of thinking and allowing for self-realization and self-fulfilment [Kezar, Holcombe, 2017, p.1; The 9 evidence based]. Those HEI leaders and top managers who granted their subordinates freedom to act as co-leaders, realized how much their institution can accomplish when talent, initiative and capability of many academics and students are mobilized to achieve goals.

During implementation of the Programme, shared leadership approach supported emergence of co-leaders, but did not denounce traditional in Ukraine hierarchical leadership. The combination of the two proved rather fruitful: while a leadership team focused on the institutional development project, formal leaders provided it with due support.

One more feature of shared leadership approach contributed to the success of the Programme. To exercise shared leadership, certain skills and attitude are required: adaptability, creativity, collaboration, flexibility, interdependence [Kezar, Holcombe, 2017, p. 3-4], consensus building, positive group interaction, team member satisfaction [Bergman, Rentshch, Small, Davenport, Bergman, 2012, p. 22, 24, 27], discipline [Six Fundamentals]. It is noteworthy that there is a reverse process: shared leadership when practiced helps to develop the above characterises [The 9 evidence-based], enhancing communication and collaboration, raising staff satisfaction, contributing to overall performance of an institution. Some HEIs who took part in the Programme solicited additional trainings for their staff in order to develop leadership capacity, fine-tune organizational culture, enhance quality of education and institutional performance.

One of the most essential conclusions made by us and reiterated in external evaluation report is that university leadership should be further advanced and enhanced in higher education sector [Impact Report, 2019, p. 5-6; p. 33-35] by joint efforts of academia, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, donors who fund education programmes, researchers, experts and civic activists engaged in the modernization and restructuring of higher education sector. In spite of recognition of importance of university leadership theme by higher education community and at political level [Impact Report, 2019, p.32], university leadership today is not on the list of national or sectoral priorities, nor has obtained international donor support. While the British Council in Ukraine support to higher education sector continues, it will focus in the next three years on teaching and learning excellence [Higher Education Teaching Excellence Programme] and address university leadership only indirectly. Therefore, Ukrainian HEIs will have to rely on their own

expertise, leadership capacity and commitment in driving changes and advancing university leadership further.

Simultaneously, it is stated (and we relate to this) that HEIs who took part in the Programme are well equipped to sustain leadership developments boosted by their participation in the Programme and further advance changes inside their universities and – through knowledge sharing and exchange – in higher education sector at large.

Drawing from experience accumulated during the implementation of Ukraine Higher Education Leadership Development Programme, lessons learnt, conclusions of impact report, consultations with participants of the above Programme, available resources on university leadership development, we have developed a set of recommendations for Ukrainian HEIs and higher education sector aimed at sustaining changes initiated by the Programme and further advancing them at institutional and sectoral levels.

In planning and implementing leadership development activities, Ukrainian HEIs should choose a comprehensive approach starting with the formulation of institutional development strategy and following the basic steps like conceptualizing the values, vision, writing mission statement, setting the goals etc.

Formulation of institutional values is an essential stage in institutional development, including planning of transformational change and development of competences to lead change. Ukrainian HEIs following the principles of institutional autonomy are free to choose their institutional values depending upon traditions, external context (political, economic, financial situation, relations with partners etc.), owners' or clients' expectations. Meanwhile, the list of values associated with shared leadership in a university is recommended by LFHE [Bolden, 2015, p. 21-22].

For developing institutional strategy and planning leadership development, LFHE recommends a tool that was tested in UK and Australian universities [Bolden, p. 21-22]; the same tool can be used for evaluation and self-evaluation of the current state of leadership development at the institutional level. The tool called «action self-enabling resource for shared leadership» identifies factors in support of university leadership, sets condition and proposes certain activities for practicing shared leadership approach in HEIs. This instrument is comprised of four dimensions: «context», «culture», «change», «relationship» that integrate individual, social, organizational / structural intersections within the institution; nominates values pertaining to university leadership: «trust», «respect», «recognition» and «collaboration»; and identifies four enablers (i.e. parameters that enable shared leadership) that facilitate shared leadership development: «people», «processes», «professional development» and «resources» [Bolden, 2015, p. 21-22].

Ukrainian HEIs, depending upon their goals, objectives, capacity and resources, are free to choose whether to focus on four enablers simultaneously, or prioritize and reinforce enablers consecutively. Of course, the preferred approach would be the synchronized effort aimed at four enablers; at the same, the choice of «people» or «processes» or «professional development» if supported by «resources» would alone produce a positive effect.

A number of steps taken at the institutional and inter-university levels by HEIs that took part in the Programme can «intensify and extend change across other universities» [Impact Report, 2019, p. 35] contributing to higher education sector reform.

University leadership theme should be mainstreamed into all HEIs' activities: teaching and learning, research, governance and management, student self-government, service to community. Practicing leadership on a daily basis will provide sufficient data for leadership discourse.

Discourse is a powerful means of sustaining interest to leadership and advancing it further. Evolving academic discourse, as well as dialogue among communities of practice – academic staff,

administrative staff, top and mid-level university managers, students – will help keep university leadership issues high on the agenda.

Discourse should extend to inter-university level. Communication events dedicated to leadership only can be organized within annual conference frameworks; or HEIs should include a section on leadership to their regular conference(s). By participation in conferences, other communication events of partners, HEIs will facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing, augment the network, initiate new projects of events. With time, University Leadership Network should emerge; it can be institutionalized formally or exist as an informal association of dedicated partners.

University leadership issues are to be addressed in professional development programmes. Trainings in leadership for academic and administrative staff, students, HEI leadership will be supported by ongoing research, discourse and practice; trained in leadership staff will be better prepared to engage in research, teaching, management and governance.

Judging from the Programme experience, students will be enthusiastic supporters of university leadership development. They are to be involved into leadership development agenda together with university staff in all activities at all stages.

In all above activities support of HEI leadership is of utmost importance.

Commitment to university leadership development should be recognized by a reward – for example, University Leadership Label. Such reward can be a joint initiative of the British Council in Ukraine and Institute of Higher Education of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine; or it can be an initiative of a future University Leadership Network. Criteria for the award of the Label will be developed by Ukrainian HEIs themselves.

To support leadership development, other transformative changes in higher education sector, Ukraine cannot rely on international donor support only. It is time for Ukraine's higher education community to mobilize its own resources, which can be drawn via crowdfunding. Another solution would be to solicit support of domestic – Ukrainian – donors. The latter support can take the form of a foundation or endowment for university leadership development. Both crowdfunding and endowment are recognized charitable instruments in Ukraine.

Conclusions

1. University leadership is important for driving change in Ukraine's higher education sector. There is a substantial interest to university leadership theme at an individual, institutional, sectoral levels.

2. Available resources and existing capacity in university leadership development, especially at HEIs that took part in Ukraine Higher Education Leadership Development Programme, are sufficient to sustain and advance leadership development at the institutional level.

3. In the absence of political initiatives in support of university leadership development at the sectoral and national levels, change agents among Ukraine's higher education community could take steps to further leadership development.

4. These steps include:

- unfolding discourse on university leadership at all levels;
- mainstream university leadership into all HEI activities;
- facilitate inter-university cooperation and knowledge exchange and sharing, support and promote inter-institutional communities of practice;
- involve students into university leadership discourse and practice;
- organize a campaign to promote establishment of a privately funded foundation or endowment on university leadership development.

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Калашнікова Світлана
Оржель Олена**Розвиток лідерського потенціалу університетів: досвід України****Анотація**

У статті аналізуються результати виконання Програми розвитку лідерського потенціалу університетів України, яка реалізовувалася протягом 2016 – 2019 років спільними зусиллями Британської Ради в Україні, Фондації лідерства у вищій освіті Великої Британії, Інституту вищої освіти Національної академії педагогічних наук України Міністерства освіти і науки України.

Стаття базується на спостереженнях, враженнях, міркуваннях виконавців та учасників програми, а також спирається на висновки оцінювання Програми та її впливу, проведеного зовнішнім оцінювачем.

Автори статті роблять висновок, що у системі вищої освіти України університетське лідерство є важливим чинником впровадження змін на індивідуальному, інституційному та секторальному рівнях і що наявні сьогодні у сфері вищої освіти ресурси та інституційна спроможність є достатніми, щоб надалі продовжувати розвиток університетського лідерства.

Автори стверджують, що підхід розподіленого лідерства довів свою ефективність під час реалізації Програми і пропонують надалі використовувати розподілене лідерство як інструмент розв'язання проблем, з якими сьогодні стикається вища освіта України.

Крім аналізу уроків та досвіду, накопиченого за результатами виконання Програми, у статті представлені рекомендації щодо подальшого запровадження і поширення університетського лідерства на інституційному та секторальному рівнях у національній системі вищої освіти, зокрема пропонується:

- розгорнути дискурс з тематики університетського лідерства на інституційному і суб-інституційному, секторальному та національному рівнях;
- інтегрувати університетське лідерство в усі напрями університетської діяльності: викладання і навчання, дослідження, врядування та менеджмент, студентське самоврядування, міжнародне співробітництво тощо;
- активізувати між-університетську співпрацю, обмін знаннями та досвідом щодо університетського лідерства;
- залучати студентів до обговорення питань та практикування університетського лідерства;
- започаткувати інформаційну кампанію з метою збору приватних фінансових пожертв задля заснування фондації або *ендаументу з розвитку університетського лідерства*.

Ключові слова: агенти змін, спів-лідери, вища освіта, інституційна стратегія, розподілене лідерство, університет, цінності.

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