

# 4

*Creating a new generation of leaders and managers has been the task of the innovative U.K. Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.*

## A Challenging Journey: From Leadership Courses to Leadership Foundation for Higher Education

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In 1978, John Adair was appointed professor of leadership studies at the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom. His was a landmark appointment in two ways. First, this chair was the first professorial-level appointment in leadership studies in the world, and second, Adair's appointment sparked a range of leadership development initiatives in higher education, from leadership courses for students, new graduates, and alumni to programs for departmental chairs and more senior academic and administrative staff. Prior to the 1980s, academic staff training had largely focused on the development of teachers and teaching (Matheson, 1981).

Over two decades, and building on Adair's pioneering work, colleagues of Adair (alongside others) have sought to develop and tailor leadership and management programs to the specific context of universities, drawing on parallel research efforts. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, initiatives in management and leadership development have spread, albeit unevenly, across higher education in the United Kingdom. However, the research base has not grown commensurately. By 2000, it was clear that higher education still lagged behind other sectors (such as health, industry, or local government) in its attention to management and leadership development and research on the running of the business. The sector also trailed its major competitor, the United States, which had established a national lead in leadership development through the work of the American Council on Education (Green and McDade, 1991).



The picture changed in a significant way in 2003–2004. Acting on research findings, a changing political climate, and awareness of increasing economic, social, and political challenges for institutions, the higher education funding bodies in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland made a significant investment in leadership development. With collective ownership by higher education's representative bodies (Universities UK and the Standing Conference of Principals) and start-up funding from the councils, the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education was established. This chapter discusses this innovation, tracing its roots back to the research and development work in the United Kingdom that lies behind it. The chapter also highlights the challenges that surround the topic of leadership development in higher education. There are three parts to the story: putting leadership development on the map; moving the agenda forward—research, politics, and timing; and the Leadership Foundation in action—challenges and opportunities.

Although this chapter focuses on one national initiative, the context will be familiar to other countries where higher education reforms call for strengthened leadership, management, and governance as part of the balance between increased autonomy and accountability for institutions (World Bank, 2002). The initiative was also developed in the light of comparisons with other sectors and countries, particularly the United States, but also Canada, Australia, South Africa, and continental Europe. Both the journey taken and the model adopted for the foundation should be of interest beyond the United Kingdom.

### **Putting Leadership Development on the Map in Higher Education**

Based on early analysis and development of leadership training for the army and subsequent work with commerce and industry, John Adair developed a model of leadership known as functional or action-centered leadership (Adair, 1968). He was influenced by American work on group dynamics and motivation (Lewin, 1944; Maslow, 1954) as well as the work of early management theorists, such as Fayol (1949). Adair proposed that people in working groups—whether small teams or large organizations—had three sets of needs that had to be fulfilled if performance and satisfaction were to be achieved. These he illustrated in terms of three overlapping circles: a need to achieve a common task, to be kept together as a working group, and to achieve individual motivation, development, and satisfaction (see Figure 4.1). The function of leadership, exercised through the actions and behaviors of leaders who carried the leadership role, was to ensure that these three sets of needs were met and kept in balance. Adair also identified a number of functional responsibilities for leaders in relation to each circle (setting objectives, briefing, planning, controlling, informing, supporting, and reviewing). His success criteria for leadership revolved around direction setting, achievement

**Figure 4.1. John Adair's Action-Centered Leadership Model**

of the task, and developing a high-performing team characterized by high levels of individual motivation and intragroup support.

Adair's model marked a departure from U.S. work on leadership at the time (see Stogdill, 1974) by focusing on the actions and behaviors of leaders rather than the traits or qualities of leaders. He also identified three key dimensions of leadership (represented by the three circles) rather than the two that had been the focus of much U.S. research (task-related and relationship-related behavior).

Adair's scholarship made a valuable contribution to leadership ideas and practice in many sectors and countries. This was formally recognized by the companies Hewitt and Honda in September 2005 with an award for a lifetime's contribution to leadership studies. Adair examined leadership through different lenses, focusing on the contribution of great leaders (Adair, 1989); applying his model of functional leadership to different organizational levels, from team to strategic levels (Adair, 1983, 2004); and demonstrating how leadership could be developed through training, experience, and reflection (Adair 1988, 2005). A further contribution was to break down the concept of the leadership role into a constellation of skills and behaviors that together, echoing McGregor (1960), made up "the human side of enterprise." Adair's constellation included decision making, team building, motivation, communication, creativity and innovation, and time management. These themes are now common in many leadership textbooks (Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy, 1999).

Adair's work reached higher education through his appointment at the University of Surrey as a full professor for five years (1978–1983) and visiting professor for a further five (1984–1989). At Surrey he initiated leadership courses for students and young graduate professionals and leadership courses for heads of academic departments and other senior staff. The courses and developments for students are not the focus of this chapter, although they are significant in themselves and spawned a range of developments in engineering and other professions. The focus here is on the programs for staff and related research on leadership and management in academic organizations that helped ultimately to support the impetus behind the Leadership Foundation.

Adair saw a close connection between programs for staff and students. In his inaugural professorial lecture, he identified five aspects of a systematic approach to leadership development that he believed universities should foster (Adair, 1988):

1. A short leadership studies course to raise awareness of key concepts and skills.
2. Field leadership training (such as structured work experience).
3. Staff training for academics and professionals involved in leadership development.
4. Research and development involving a partnership between academic and practitioner contributions to leadership.
5. Structure and ethos, or the ways in which a university can further good leadership. This includes project and teamwork, training and preparation for those with leadership responsibilities at all levels, nurturing the academic leadership role involved in teaching and research, the role of the university in exploring and discovering values for life and work, and the university's contribution to developing the leaders of tomorrow.

These themes are echoed in much of the work of the Leadership Foundation.

Adair's first initiative for academic staff was a two-day residential course for academic heads of department from across the United Kingdom. The content reflected his leadership constellation, and the pedagogy was inspired by Adair's belief in experiential and participative learning. Soon afterward, a new seminar for trios of more senior institutional leaders was mounted. Two years later, both courses had proved successful enough to warrant an application to the U.K. Department of Education and Science (DES) to fund further development of the programs linked to an evaluation. The final evaluation report noted that "the national programme for Heads of academic departments made a valuable contribution in the start-up phase of leadership and management training for Heads. In 1984 it was the only course of its kind; by 1988, 75 percent of universities were reportedly planning or already providing local or regional programmes, many of them incorporating aspects of the 'Action-Centred Leadership' model" (Middlehurst, 1989, p. 180).

### **Moving the Agenda Forward: Research, Politics and Timing**

Adair's early work with universities contributed to a changing attitude toward the exercise of leadership in academic organizations and the university's role in developing its own leaders. The vice chancellor of the University of London at the time, Lord Flowers, captured the beginnings of this spirit of change, commenting: "We have to look to our leaders of the future . . . [to create] . . . a climate in which leadership can flourish rather than be

restrained by precedent and the safety belt of committee decisions” (quoted in Adair, 1988, p. 128). Change was pushed further in the following year through the national Jarratt Report, which investigated the efficiency of management and decision making in universities. The authors recommended changes in the structure and governance of institutions to strengthen the power of executive management (Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, 1985). Similar analyses and recommendations were occurring in the United States at this time with calls for better and more visionary leadership in higher education (see, for example, “To Reclaim a Legacy,” Bennett, 1984). The American Council on Education also argued the case for stronger leadership and management in universities (Green, 1988). However, other scholars were more skeptical about what was known as the leadership crisis in American higher education and the faith shown in the power and wisdom of leadership to make a difference to institutional performance (Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum, 1989).

In the United Kingdom, the DES-funded evaluation and development project provided an opportunity to examine the views of academic heads of department about their growing leadership and management responsibilities. In all, 175 participants were surveyed, with an 81 percent response rate. Course evaluation forms were also assessed, and interviews with a smaller sample of heads (thirty-three interviews in fourteen institutions) were undertaken. This research also offered an opportunity to explore perspectives on the context of declining state funding and increasing student enrollments that accompanied the changing expectations of the role of heads of department (Middlehurst, 1989; Middlehurst, Pope, and Wray, 1991).

A second project (1989–1991), building on the first one, investigated the changing expectations of the roles of more senior staff, examining perceptions of leadership and management and leadership development needs at different levels of an institution. Ten universities were included in this study (out of a total population at the time in the United Kingdom of some fifty universities). There were 251 people interviewed, and an 86 percent response rate was achieved from a questionnaire survey of fifty senior staff. In parallel in the United States, a more detailed and extensive five-year longitudinal study of institutional leadership (the Institutional Leadership Project) facilitated comparisons between the U.K. and U.S. contexts and the range of views concerning higher education leadership and management. These three studies from the United Kingdom and the United States provided valuable data for the development and subsequent work of the Leadership Foundation.

The evaluation of the Adair leadership courses brought into sharp relief the contrasting attitudes of academic heads of department to the application of management and leadership concepts to universities (particularly concepts drawn from industrial, military, and commercial settings). Respondents drew attention to the distinctiveness of universities as organizations as well as to the receptiveness or otherwise of their institutions toward more

executive styles of management. The question of differences between management and leadership was also raised. Comments highlighted:

- The difficulties of managing change in universities where strong democratic and antimanagerial traditions existed
- The problem of managing highly individualistic academics with no strong sense of corporate identity to department or university
- Insufficient departmental autonomy to carry management through
- Lack of a management ethos in the faculty and resistance to one in the university as a whole
- Difficulties of implementing leadership on account of vagueness of institutional objectives, endless talking, and few decisions, further hindered by recent financial cuts
- The need for a level of understanding of management concepts and the freedom to exercise degrees of control and influence in order to exercise effective leadership

For some participants, university culture and ethos made the course content difficult to apply in practice or not relevant conceptually. For others, the courses helped to create a positive approach to effective departmental management and new conceptions of the parameters of the job. These divided and contrasting views about the applicability of leadership and management concepts to universities (and Adair's model in particular) were an intriguing product of this study. Such views have been highlighted in more recent research in Australia and the United Kingdom (Ramsden, 1998; Deem, 1998).

The second DES-funded study (Middlehurst, Pope, and Wray, 1991) focused more deeply on the changing operating environment, highlighting increasing levels of public scrutiny of universities and the associated management and developmental responses. Such public scrutiny is now widespread in higher education reforms around the world that focus on efficiency and accountability in the use of public funds, value for money in the deployment of resources, combined with pressure to increase entrepreneurial activities and enhance the quality of individual and institutional performance. The U.K. study, which considered the impact of change on institutional cultures and structures, individual and collective roles, and associated skills and experience, should resonate with experiences of higher education reform in other countries.

The research noted changes in the management roles of senior staff, a redefining of management structures and processes, and an increasing burden of strategic management and leadership. University management was being strengthened through extending management and leadership responsibilities and roles across different levels of the institution. As a practical response, respondents saw a need for more targeted and systematic training and development in order to respond to new or changing roles and expectations

(Middlehurst, Pope, and Wray, 1991). This is not to say that such changes were uncontested or that training was seen as necessary or desirable by all respondents. Indeed, some responses to the notion of leadership and management training for academics were strong enough to suggest a clash of cultures; they appeared to offend underlying belief systems or cults of academic life (Middlehurst, 1993), for example:

- The cult of the gifted amateur (any intelligent, well-educated individual can undertake a leadership role without training)
- The cult of heredity (those with natural talent will rise to leadership without training)
- The cult of deficiency (training is essentially remedial and only those who prove to be ineffective need it)
- The cult of inadequacy (once a person is elevated to a role or position, loss of face results from admitting gaps in knowledge or competence)
- The cult of the implicit (learning should take place through gradual induction to the norms and expectations of academic life rather than through more explicit and formal routes)
- The cult of selection (selecting good staff will obviate the need for, and cost of, development)
- The cult of the intellectual (there is no scientific basis to management, particularly university management, so the practice of management does not warrant focused attention through training or development)

The evidence and analysis provided by the two U.K. studies, the example and wider take-up of the Adair-inspired leadership programs, and the pressures of a changing economic and political operating environment prompted a first national response by university leaders. In 1991, the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) established a central unit to promote and support staff development for all categories of staff (the Universities Staff Development Unit). This was an important initiative, but for some years, the specific focus on leadership and management, particularly at the level of senior staff, was diminished. This changed in 1999 with the launch of the Top Management Programme for Higher Education, led by two of Adair's former colleagues. The design of this nine-month program was influenced by a range of models, including the American Council of Education's Fellows Program in the United States, the European seminar for new rectors of universities, and the U.K. government's Top Management Programme.

Despite the launch of the Top Management Programme, there remained a concern that the United Kingdom was giving inadequate attention at the national and institutional levels to the training and support of individuals for the increasingly significant and complex tasks of leading, managing, and governing universities and colleges. The Higher Education Funding Council for England launched a funding initiative to support the development of effective management practice, voting £10 million over a three-year period to support

developmental projects. A successful bid to this fund provided a further opportunity for research. A survey of the character, purpose, and volume of management development provision for senior managers in U.K. higher education was undertaken alongside a comparison of provision in a sample of public sectors in the United Kingdom and higher education overseas (Middlehurst and Garrett, 2001). The findings categorized institutional approaches along a continuum from nonformal and individualized (about two-thirds of the sector), to more formalized and integrated approaches to leadership and management development within an institutionwide framework linked to institutional objectives. A small number of institutions (some 2 to 5 percent) offered a structured but flexible mix of institutionally and individually targeted development. A set of case studies showcased some of the most innovative approaches.

The comparative data also highlighted weaknesses in higher education. The other public sectors surveyed had invested more in leadership and management development within a structured framework, while countries such as the United States also appeared to be ahead of the United Kingdom in terms of tailored provision, support for innovation and development, and an overall strategy for leadership and management development. These findings were made more stark by widespread recognition of the increasingly competitive international economic and political context for both higher education and the United Kingdom in general (Council for Excellence in Management and Leadership, 2002).

The research galvanized Universities UK (formerly the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals) to consultations with the sector and government. A steering committee produced a business case and business plan for a new national organization with a central focus on leadership, management, and governance. The U.K. funding councils provided £10 million start-up funding, and the previous Staff Development unit (now called the Higher Education Staff Development Agency) was absorbed into a new Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE). It retained relevant activities such as the Top Management Programme. The vision of the new organization is focused on the dual challenge that research and earlier experience had identified: strengthen practice and change attitudes toward leadership and management and leadership development in higher education. The target is for “the leadership, governance and management of UK higher education institutions to be regarded as world-class. Excellence in leadership and management should be recognised and held in the same high esteem as excellence in research, teaching and learning” (Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, 2004, p. 1).

### **The Leadership Foundation in Action: Challenges and Opportunities**

The Leadership Foundation can draw on a rich inheritance of comparative research, developmental activity, and networks of practice. It is using this experience to create an innovative (and perhaps unique at this time)

approach. This section of the chapter illustrates this approach in terms of organizational design and funding, a thematic and integrated focus, a range of developmental initiatives and opportunities, and positioning as champion and challenger.

**Organizational Design and Funding.** The foundation has a small core of staff with developmental and service functions. Staff are drawn from higher education and the wider public and private sectors, with contracts ranging from permanent to short term and secondments (fixed terms). The headquarters location is London, but staff are also located in Scotland and the north of England, with a spread of regional responsibilities across the United Kingdom. The team of seventeen staff and a wider range of associates, recruited through open advertisement and selection, is responsible for the delivery of programs and projects. Members of the governing board were recruited through advertisement and are drawn from all sectors. The chair is from the private sector, and the chief executive is also drawn from outside higher education. Constitutionally, the foundation is a charity and company limited by guarantee, thus giving it a degree of independence.

Seed funding (over three years) was provided from government sources through the funding councils. However, the foundation aims to achieve longer-term sustainability through institutional subscriptions and sales of products and services. Membership of the LFHE in 2004–2005 totaled 162 higher education institutions and related agencies, including a growing international membership.

**Thematic and Integrated Focus.** The foundation combines four integrated work streams: developing individuals, building institutional capacity in leadership, governance and management, and creating learning networks and generating ideas and innovation. In addition, there are three cross-cutting themes to LFHE's work: focusing on diversity, drawing on practice in other sectors, and learning from international experience. The foundation uses a variety of avenues to deliver these cross-cutting themes. These include partnerships with other organizations, affirmative action in relation to program participation, playing a leading role in cross-sector networks, joint advertising and Web linking of programs and activities, recruitment of staff with diverse expertise and experience, and cofunding of projects with relevant organizations. Cross-sector membership of the board is also invaluable.

To guide its international strategy, the LFHE has established an international reference network with high-level institutional and agency members drawn from many parts of the world (for example, the World Bank, UNESCO, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). In early 2006, drawing on this international membership, the LFHE mounted an international leadership summit to discuss the global leadership role of universities, the role of institutional leadership in internationalizing the university, and the contribution of leadership development to these agendas. Specific partnerships with parallel organizations such as the

American Council on Education, the European University Association, and the global Center for Creative Leadership facilitate study exchanges, joint development of programs for senior leaders and managers, and access to up-to-date knowledge of leadership development initiatives and innovation (Center for Creative Leadership, 2004).

The LFHE offers both a present orientation toward the strengthening of existing practice and a future orientation. The latter is represented in programs (for example, through scenario planning events) and a cross-organizational research post. This post is colocated with the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE), a global strategic information service for higher education set up in 2002 by Universities UK and the Association of Commonwealth Universities. The OBHE's audience of national bodies and ministries, international agencies, and senior managers and leaders in higher education is similar to the LFHE's target audience. By combining and leveraging resources, the foundation gains access to a wider range of knowledge-based products for its own clients, and the observatory increases the range and depth of its coverage on leadership, governance, and management issues and their developmental implications and outcomes.

**Range of Developmental Initiatives and Opportunities.** The four work streams and cross-cutting themes provide opportunities for piloting and delivering a variety of developmental interventions and learning opportunities for the sector. Indicative examples are given for each work stream in Table 4.1.

The foundation recognizes the diversity and autonomy of the higher education sector in the United Kingdom, as well as the diversity of individuals, professions, and communities. Not only is its range of activities diverse, the learning processes deployed are varied, including the use of diagnostic assessments (such as 360-degree review processes), live case studies and visits, international twinning projects, case studies, institution-based projects, action learning, mentoring, coaching, research, and the use of stories and theater. There is also a deeper reason for the variety offered. The intention is also to challenge traditional approaches and conceptions of leadership and management development in the higher education sector in order to increase levels of engagement, demonstrate the personal and professional benefit of such development, and highlight (and test) different pedagogical approaches.

**Role and Positioning: Champion and Challenge.** The business case for the foundation rested on a set of linked rationales:

- A more competitive and challenging external environment for institutions required stronger investment in the selection, training, and support of leaders and managers.
- There was insufficient investment and engagement in the development of leadership, governance, and management in higher education.

**Table 4.1. Examples of the Leadership Foundation's Activities**

<i>Work Stream</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>
Supporting and developing individuals	Development center Leadership programs for managers and leaders Governor development National mentoring scheme International exchanges and visits	Systematic self-assessment for individuals Top management, senior strategic leaders, preparing for strategic, and research leadership New and experienced governors; dialogues between the vice chancellor and chair Brokers and supports mentoring arrangements Transnational leadership development
Building institutional capacity	Strategic collaboration Tailored consultancy Change Academy LFHE fellowships Succession planning Regional or national needs analysis	Focus on leading partnerships Top team support, change management, coaching Program for institutional teams with change agendas Fund for institutional change projects Background research on current practice and cross-sector comparisons Nationwide institutional and stakeholder consultation and survey pioneered in Scotland
Creating learning networks	Human resources, finance, estates, library and information services, deputy vice chancellors, heads of administration	Codesign of specialist programs and activities
Generating ideas and innovation	Commissioned program of research on higher education leadership, governance, and management Small development projects Knowledge-based resources	Gender and leadership, changing senior roles and development implications, leadership of teaching, strategic collaboration, distributed leadership, leadership and effectiveness in higher education Practice-based project funding Purchase of licenses for Web-based resources on behalf of members

- The practice of leadership, governance, and management was not always held in high esteem within the sector or by some stakeholders from the lay community and government. Sources of evidence for this point differed. Within the sector, some institutions reported increasing difficulty in attracting academics to key management positions (such as heads of department or deans). Externally, higher education management was not infrequently compared unfavorably with private sector practice by politicians and the media (despite countervailing evidence such as provided by the findings of the Lambert report, 2003, on university-business collaboration in the United Kingdom).

The task of the foundation was therefore conceived as delivering a substantive development agenda and providing a challenge to internal and external perceptions of higher education management and leadership. Achieving cultural change of this kind is a long-term game involving a range of symbolic and substantive mechanisms. The foundation's marketing and communications strategy is as important here as the development of an evidence base of research. The communications strategy includes printed newsletters, briefing papers, and reports, as well as Web-based and electronic materials. Media coverage and political engagement are also key focuses. The foundation's independent position within the sector facilitates high-level roundtable discussions (observing the Chatham House Rule of political topics, which facilitates free speech while protecting confidentiality at meetings, so participants feel freer to contribute to an honest discussion of the issues), such as changing governance structures or performance management in higher education. The LFHE can act as both a champion and challenger of current practice and political perspectives of the sector.

## Conclusion

The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education is a new venture in the United Kingdom built on an evidence base of research, experience, and practice drawn from the sector itself and cross-sector and international comparisons. Its agenda is ambitious, and only time will tell whether its vision will prevail. Two years from its establishment, the foundation has just undergone an independent evaluation initiated by its funders. This strongly positive evaluation will assist the foundation in its future development and its continuing role in support of excellence in higher education leadership, governance, and management.

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“The Leadership Challenge is the best research-based practical field guide for leaders I have ever read. While the world around us has changed significantly since 1987, when I picked up the first edition of the book, the simple relevant truths of what great leaders do has not. I love the personal best leadership stories that highlight the five simple-to-understand exemplary practices that really matter. Great leaders are lifelong learners, and there is no better place to start or continue your leadership learning journey than to read this book.” James Foster, senior vice president, chief pro

Leadership courses are popular among those seeking to enhance their leadership skills and ability, seeking leadership positions, or perhaps looking for a change of career. There are plenty of leadership courses located at high quality educational institutions around the world, giving students many options in a variety of locations and experiences that can promote professional development and personal growth. Read more.

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The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) was an organisation in the United Kingdom providing support and advice on leadership, governance and management for higher education, based in Holborn, London. It was merged into Advance HE in 2018. The organisation was established in 2004 by the UUK and SCOP (now known as GuildHE). It took over the function of the Higher Education Staff Development Agency (HESDA), based in Ingram House in Sheffield. It was incorporated as a company in October 2003