



Branson, C. M., Marra, M., Franken, M., & Penny, D. (2018). Leadership in higher education from a transrelational perspective. Bloomsbury Academic.

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The book is one in a series called *Perspectives on leadership in higher education* published by Bloomsbury. This is the fourth book that I have reviewed in the series. The aim of the series overall was to research and discuss the challenges facing universities in the 21st-century, and with a focus on leadership to meet and respond to these challenges.

A central premise in this book in the series is the distinction between leadership and management. In the introduction, the authors refer to the origins of both terms and observe that *Management* comes from the Latin word, meaning to handle or restrain, with particular reference to a horse. *Administration* also has Latin roots, meaning to serve. In contrast, *Leadership* has its origins in old English and Germanic words, meaning to guide or showing others the way. The word leader evolved to meaning someone guiding a group or the person in first place, hence to lead. By the 19th century leadership had been used in theatrical settings to describe the person who took the lead role in the production. It was not until the 20th century that leadership was applied to those leading organisations.

Within this context I can recall my first experience with University management, leadership and administration. At this time, management and administration was largely undertaken by a 'super registrar', with outposted staff undertaking administration in the faculties. The overall leadership of the university was in the hands of the Vice Chancellor. The Vice Chancellor was the overall leader of the institution, from an academic direction point of view as well as having accountability for the success of the institution, and generally leading in a collegial way. At a departmental level, a head of school would handle the management and administration of the school in conjunction with the outposted central staff, and may or may not have had leadership responsibilities. More often than not, academic leadership was separate to the management of the school or faculty. Academic leadership generally came from the professors of the school, also in a collegial way. Over the years with increased managerialism the positions seem to have merged with the head of the school or faculty being called the leader of the faculty notwithstanding the fact

that such a leader was really more of the manager and administrator, as managerialism prevailed. At the highest level, Vice Chancellors also seem to have taken on a role more like a CEO. While in the past, their appointment may have been linked to having been superior scholars, a different skill set seems to be required, encompassing management, administration, as well as leadership. Institutions have also grown to become multi-billion-dollar enterprises, most with multi-national activities and facing significant challenges on many fronts, placing increased demand for high level leadership skills.

Of particular interest in the issues raised in the book is the notion that a leader develops and changes culture, whereas management and administration operate within an existing culture. This clearly identifies the role of the leader in setting a pathway for the organisation and creating the culture with which to deliver on the vision.

The book is organised into an introduction, eight themed chapters and a conclusion. The first themed chapter considers organisational culture and the vital role that it plays within organisations. Specifically, it looks at leadership in a higher education context and looks at relevant literature highlighting the critical importance of culture. It identifies research around the impact of increased managerialism and observes negative consequences including an adverse impact on the cultural norms and expectations within higher education institutions.

Chapter two develops a theoretical foundation for leadership and develops the concept of transrelational leadership. The four fundamental qualities of a transrelational leader are identified and discussed. At the heart of leadership is the leader's ability to interact and develop relationships within the group. It is argued that effective transrelational leadership results in a group accepting and endorsing a person as their leader. Chapter 3 builds on this theory to develop descriptions and illustrations of what such an approach to leadership would look like if adopted by leaders.

Chapter 4 considers the concept of power and influence within the organisation. It is proposed that power in a transrelational world is founded through inclusion and transparent means, rather than coercion and control often present in more traditional views of organisations. The chapter concludes with the view that transrelational leadership is more likely to raise commitment and motivation from those working for the leader.

Organisational change and the challenge provided by the need for change is discussed in chapter 5 in terms of how transformational leadership can lead to successful change in comparison to other leadership theories.

The subject of chapter 6 is how to achieve high performance within an organisation using a transrelational leadership approach. At the heart of this is trust and the encouragement of employees to take risks in the development of creativity and innovation within the organisation. Trust is obviously a critical element so that employees can be innovative, make mistakes and learn from their mistakes in a supportive trusting environment.

Chapter 7 considers the impact on human resource management of transrelational management and has some almost scathing views of the way HR is handled currently in many higher education institutions.

Chapter 8 considers learning within the organisation. This chapter describes a project from a university in New Zealand that has been concerned about improving its performance through improving leadership practice within the institution. The institution in question was prompted to undertake the project having observed that many academics come into leadership roles without knowledge and understanding of leadership in its various forms. The chapter concludes with a valuable critique of the challenges associated with change within higher education institutions.

In conclusion, the authors note the concept of transrelational leadership has potential for adoption across Higher Education institutions and in fact is strongly preferred as an alternative to the rise of managerialism. However, they are very clear that while there are many perceived benefits, there are a number of challenges to be overcome, not the least being general acceptance that transrelational leadership is the appropriate form of leadership to be adopted in that sector.

Overall, the book is a valuable contribution to the series and, more importantly, the debate over the future of higher education institutions and the leadership required to adapt to external pressures and change.

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