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Leadership Preparation and Institutional Priorities: A Global Perspective on Higher Education

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Abstract

Higher education, globally, is at a critical juncture. Public demands for measurable outcomes from the college going experience coupled with student demands for on-demand education place these institutions at the forefront of change that they have never experienced before. The leadership of these institutions, therefore, is critical to protect both the integrity of the institutions and experience, but also to be appropriately responses to all of the different stakeholders who have expectations for these institutions and what happens within their walls. The purpose for conducting the study was to identify the soft skills necessary for effective college leadership along with the activities of and priorities for leaders. Drawing on a global sample of 400 college presidents, differences were noted between the responses of leaders in the United States, Europe, India, and Asia. The study concludes that there is a real necessity for higher education to come together to explore their future and to find a way to assure that these institutions can meet the multiple demands placed on them, and, in a way that assures that future generations can rely on higher education as a mechanism for cultural preservation and progression.

Keywords

Leadership, College Leaders, Leadership Skills, College Administration, Higher Education Outcomes

1. Introduction

Higher education is a global industry. There are over 220 million students enrolled in higher education around the world (World Bank, 2021) in over 25,000 colleges and universities (Bouchrika, 2022). In this massive industry that

has been valued at $77 billion USD (Market Data Forecast, 2022), there are many consistencies across country boundaries and continents. There remains a consistent activity for these institutions that at the very center of is the recruitment and education of students in degree programs that ultimately empower them to make choices about how they live their lives, including professional activities as well as how they are engaged in society. There are, however, massive global changes and trends that impact these institutions, and ultimately, the leadership of these 25,000 colleges and universities will dictate how they respond to societal challenges.

At the heart of the challenges facing higher education is the debate about the role and purpose of these institutions and whether their role in social mobility and enhancing the public good take precedence over the individual or self-promotion related advantages of these institutions. Their role in preparing a workforce as compared to preparing a citizenry has been debated and profiled around the world (Miller & Nadler, 2022). These activities have typically been presented as polemic options for the existence of higher education rather than serving as descriptors for variations in curriculum and the student experience. And ultimately, the direction and institution takes and what it prioritizes is the direct result of the leadership provided by senior institutional administrators.

Leadership is critical for determining the role, direction, and activities of higher education institutions (Preymann, Sterrer, & Gaisch, 2016; Salihu, Ramadneh, & Rashid, 2020). Leaders bring with them into their roles ideas, dispositions, as well as beliefs, work ethics, and preferences that can influence what an organization prioritizes (Walk, 2022). In the college or university setting, this can mean that certain activities or values are emphasized over others. A strong background and belief in the liberal arts, for example, might mean that additional resources are directed to those majors. If career placement is a priority, then activities that drive students to practical job placements might be prioritized. This prioritization can mean additional financial support, faculty and staff position lines, attention in fundraising and in institutional plans, and even how leaders in some institutions request public support for them. Institutional leadership determines not only the "what" institutions prioritize, but "how" they go about creating and supporting those priorities. Leadership, simply, is the most important element in institutional decision-making (Burgess, 2011; Love, 2013).

There are multiple levels of leadership within higher education institutions as complex organizations, and each of these has some level of discretion in making and implementing decisions (Mackey, 2008). College presidents, known as chancellors on some campuses, have responsibility for the overall direction, activity, and ultimately, the success of an institution (DiLoreto-Hill, 2022; Gearhart, Nadler, & Miller, 2020). These individuals provide the overarching leadership necessary for an institution to be successful, and subsequently, are the focus of the current study.

The problem addressed in the current study is situated within the context of what higher education can, should, and might become in the future. With sig-

nificant fiscal stresses being placed on these institutions coupled with changing perspectives of what might constitute a "learned citizen" the expected outcome of employment, there is an important need to understand how leaders are shaping these institutions. Therefore, the purpose for conducting the study was to describe and compare the perceptions of global higher education leaders (college presidents) about the soft skills required of leadership, the activities to be encouraged by leaders, and the priority work areas for higher education leaders.

The study is grounded in the intersection of organizational behavior and leadership studies, relying on both the positional authority of the presidential position and the relational aspects required to build consensus and buy-in on agenda setting and advancement. These concepts have been situated in higher education by such foundational authors as Birnbaum (1988), Sporn (1999), and Ortenblad and Korris (2014). In this context, administrative authority has the ability to create and enact policy, but the consistency of its application, along with its acceptance among faculty, staff, and students, is predicated on the ability of presidential and leadership actors to create acknowledgement and reception of this agenda. Birnbaum referred to this as "coupling," whereby an agenda's implementation is subject to the degree in which an institution links authority with implementation. Within public policy, the concept relates to Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) and more recently Lindquist (2006) and falls under the umbrella of "policy implementation," noting the complexity of authority boundaries and the series of enforcement mechanisms that may, or may not, relate to how directives are implemented. Ultimately, though, policy and agenda implementation within the academy relies greatly on the informal, relational aspects of leaders influencing campus actors to implement a particular agenda or policy. This notion of relationship is tied to the soft skills of the campus leader, which in turn is the focus of the study.

2. Background of the Study

To best understand the complexity of higher education leadership and the challenges that leaders, particularly college presidents face, there are two distinct areas of consideration. The first are the broad trends impacting higher education. These trends, issues, and problems often dictate what a college president must respond to with the greatest urgency, and although these vary around the world, there are some commonalities to be considered. Second, there is a body of relevant literature on higher education leadership to be considered. This literature particularly focuses on the challenges of leading faculty members who have some degree of freedom in completing their work, making the idea of 'coupling,' as described by Birnbaum (1988) particularly challenging.

2.1. Higher Education Trends

Higher education throughout the world is facing a variety of challenges that transcend nationalities. There are strong emphases placed on science and tech-

nology (often referred to as STEM related fields), and although this emphasis is not intended to be competitive, it is often cast in direct opposition to the liberal arts and humanities. Other areas of academic emphasis have been in fields with direct professional application, such as business or health care management, and these, too have been at times seen as adversarial in relation to the liberal arts or STEM fields. And although this disciplinary debate has taken center stage in some countries and at some institutions, there is also the question of what students hope to attain from their time in higher education.

The debate of student outcome expectation has historically varied but seems to be largely aligned in contemporary times with finding occupational success upon graduation. This means that institutions have to align their academic programs and ancillary experiences directly with the labor market, which challenges the traditional ideas of college student development. The idea of college student development holds that through enrollment, taking broad classes that challenge traditional ways of thinking, and being forced to interact with a wide range of individuals, the student grows and matures into a citizen capable and interested in making a civic contribution. When the higher education experience becomes one fully attuned to job seeking, such development may be challenged or even deterred.

This notion of an outcome focus is also cast against the notion of accountability, particularly for publicly subsidized institutions. The public, whether regional or national policy makers as well as taxpayers want to know that their investment in higher education has a high return on investment. This might mean that colleges and universities lead directly to students being placed in employment or that the investment in someway returns funds to the government through the generation of income, taxes, new businesses, etc. In the US, as one example, more than a dozen states have entered into performance funding programs that require certain kinds of outputs in exchange for public funding. Some of these outputs include certain graduation rates, enrollment in certain types of programs (STEM), and even the enrollment and retention of students from certain varied demographic backgrounds (Fincher, 2015).

These productivity and performance funding models that have become pervasive in the US allude to a larger issue of resource availability. How institutions are funded and how they use those funds has become an increasingly important question for institutions to respond to. Efforts to maximize resources have also become common, as philanthropic fundraising for higher education has been embraced around the globe, as has the process of investment management for institutional endowments.

Not all issues facing higher education are driven by the academy itself or its policy related stakeholders, as students have indicated their desires and concerns through their own behaviors. Students worldwide are enrolling in online courses in record numbers, suggesting that they need, or at least want, fewer on-campus, residential experiences. Additionally, they are enrolling in credential, micro-credential, and competency based programs that begin to suggest that de-

mand for the traditional baccalaureate degree program may softening. This interest in alternative formal credentials that demonstrate competence or ability comes at the same time as many national leaders proclaim the need for certain, higher levels of formal degrees as an illustration of national education.

Particularly critical for higher education is the impact of the digital revolution on the future of work. The 4IR [fourth industrial revolution] is accelerating the disruption of work and the credentialing economy and requiring universities to retool themselves to cater to growing demand for lifelong learning, the needs for reskilling and upskilling, while retaining their role as the primary sites of knowledge production and the cultivation of enlightened citizenship (Zeleza, 2022: p. 28).

The diversity of these trends reflects the complexity of the world of higher education in the 21st century. No issue is truly isolated; rather, issues faculty higher education are intertwined both within the organizational structure and behavior of the academy as well as the personnel, students, and faculty who comprise these institutions. To move forward, strong, clear leadership that both advances the academy as well as protects the integrity of the social aspects of education is strongly needed.

2.2. Higher Education Leadership

Leadership in higher education is a complex proposition that combines the situational aspects of an institution with the formal roles of a position and the personality of an individual. Even when a positionality is supposed to demand the role of a leader, there can be variables and a culture that prevent this individual from exerting leadership over the organization or unit (Bozeman, Fay, & Gaughan, 2013). Indeed, leadership, while critical to every organization, is rarely understood and difficult to contain within any specific theory or explanation (Jais, Azman, & Ghani, 2022).

Despite the difficulties associated with defining how leadership works, there is a large base of literature, applied studies, and commentary about what leadership is and how it can be successfully implemented (Jais, Azman, & Ghani, 2022). Additionally, there is a substantial commentary about how higher education leadership can and should be developed, building a capacity for institutions to best prepare themselves for current and future challenges (Thacker, Freeman, & Campbell, 2019). And, there are multiple global studies that suggest that leadership is not only central to the academy, but that this leadership will define the future of what colleges and universities look like, who they serve, and how they will fulfill their mission (Preymann, Sterrer, & Gaisch, 2016; Salihu, Ramadneh, & Rashid, 2020).

Global research on higher education leadership includes developing talent related to the competencies of leadership in Malaysian higher education (Jais, Azman, & Ghani, 2022), the challenges of leadership in higher education in the United Kingdom and Austria (Preymann, Sterrer, & Gaisch, 2016), and how different soft skills are consider in developing future leaders in India (David, 2022).

These global studies compliment a wide range of similar studies in the United States (see, for example (Burgess, 2011; Love, 2013; Jacobs, 2021)), and Thacker, Freeman, and Campbell (2019) crossed national boundaries in their discussion of what future leadership research should comprise. These authors stressed that leadership research needs to be more integrated in various cultural paradigms and that evolving global interdependence dictates that cultural understanding and integration transcends future research and practice.

The result of scanning the literature on higher education leadership clearly indicates that global, multicultural and multinational approaches should be taken to understand how these leaders will shape the future of higher education. Higher education, both conceptually and operationally, is at a key time in its evolution. Institutions and policy must reflect public demands for the outputs of these institutions, but in doing so, they face difficult questions about activities, roles, degree programs, and experiences (Miller & Nadler, 2020). The debate about the role and intention of the academy is being brought to the forefront of dialogues about the meaning and value of higher education, and leaders must be the individuals who not only bring the conversation forward to different stakeholders, but ultimately must make important decisions about the future of all of higher education (Miller & Nadler, 2016).

3. Research Methods

The study hypothesized that there was no significant difference between the soft skills needed for effective leadership, the activities of college presidents, or the priorities for these presidents based on global geography. The geographic areas included in the study were the United States, Europe, India, and Asia.

3.1. Sample

A total of 400 university leaders, defined as college presidents, were randomly selected for inclusion in the study. These individuals were initially identified using a popular, global directory of colleges and universities. These institutions were first limited to those that offered instruction in English. Once this listing of over 12,000 colleges and universities was identified, they were categorized into four groups based on their geographic location: the United States, Europe, India, and Asia. There were other English-language based colleges and universities, but these four geographic areas had the majority of institutions and the study was subsequently limited in its application to other global areas.

The sample size of 400 was determined by selecting 100 leaders from each geographic area. The size of 100 was based on Alreck and Settle's (1985) argument that responses vary in a minimal degree in samples over 100.

Once the population of institutions was set for the four geographic areas (approximately 9000 institutions), a table of random numbers was used to select 100 institutions from each area. Each of the N = 400 institutions were then reviewed online to identify the president, rector, superintendent, or chancellor of each in-

stitution, recording the individual's email address. There were 67 institutions that did not list an individual holding such a title, and these institutions were replaced in the sample.

The intent of the sample was to identify an institutional leader with the capacity to reflect on the impact of leadership on different aspects of the institution's behavior.

3.2. Instrumentation

The instrument used to collect data for the study was developed by the researcher and was based on current literature and current events in higher education. These topical areas were selected from publications such as the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and the *Times Higher Education*. Additional areas included on the survey were drawn from different leadership literature. The instrument included a section on the soft skills required for effective leadership in higher education (20 items), a section on the higher education activity that leadership perceive to be fundamental for faculty (10 items), and the priority work areas fundamental for higher education leaders (13 items). Each section asked the respondent to rate perceptions of agreement for each item, using a 1-to-5 Likert-type scale, where 1 = Strongly Disagree progressing to 5 = Strongly Agree.

The survey instrument was pilot tested with 15 non-participants and revised using their comments. Although the pilot-test sample was small, it was deemed to be appropriate due to the exploratory nature of the study. The instrument achieved a Cronbach alpha of 0.6799 on the pilot test data which was deemed appropriate for the exploratory nature of the current study. The instrument also was provided to a panel of 12 higher education leaders in two different countries to review for face validity. Based on feedback from the panel, revisions were made to the survey for clarification of what was being asked of potential respondents.

The survey was administered using an online survey provider. Potential respondents first received an email indicating that they had been identified for participation in the study. They received the survey as an email link with introductory text requesting their participation. Non-respondents then received an email reminder and request to participate five days later. A second and third email reminder was then sent in five-day intervals to non-respondents.

4. Findings

Using five follow up email prompts, a total of 229 (57% response rate) usable, completed surveys were returned for use in data analysis. The responses included 62 higher education leaders from US colleges and universities (62% response rate), 47 leaders from Europe (47% response rate), 89 leaders from institutions in India (89% response rate), and 31 from leaders of institutions in Asia (31%).

The null hypothesis that there was no significant difference between the college president responses to skills, activities, and priorities based on geographic area was rejected (Sig. 0.000, $p < 0.005$), meaning that there were significant differences in presidential responses based on geography.

4.1. Soft Skill Responses

Overall, the responding higher education leaders had a mean rating of 4.46 for all 20 items. As a group, the leaders agreed most strongly with the leadership soft skills of Digital Literacy ($\bar{x}$ = 4.82) and Teamwork ($\bar{x}$ = 4.82), followed by Interpersonal Relations ($\bar{x}$ = 4.67) Flexibility ($\bar{x}$ = 4.65), and Passion ($\bar{x}$ = 4.62; see Table 1).

Table 1. Leadership soft skills [To what extent do you agree (5 = Strongly Agree; 1 = Strongly Disagree) that the leadership soft skill is required for effective higher education leadership?].

	US *n* = 62	European *n* = 47	India *n* = 89	Asia *n* = 31	ALL N = 229
Time management	4.11	4.01*	4.30*	4.25	4.17
Decision-making	4.16	4.21	4.06	4.24	4.13
Communications-oral	4.44	4.19*	4.57*	4.19	4.39
Communications-written	4.46	4.40	4.59	4.30	4.46
Digital literacy	4.87	4.94	4.74	4.90	4.82
Crisis management	4.13*	4.83*	4.53	4.35	4.45
Passion	4.66	4.61	4.67	4.54	4.62
Planning	4.42*	3.99*	4.44	4.59	4.35
Data driven	4.10*	4.24	4.75*	4.63	4.44
Discipline	4.03*	4.67*	4.78*	4.89*	4.55
Moral/ethical values	4.11*	4.25	4.63	4.88*	4.45
Goal setting	4.63	4.37	4.62	4.40	4.53
Teamwork	4.77	4.79	4.88	4.92	4.82
Human resource skills	4.16	4.00	4.11	4.20	4.53
Creativity	4.69	4.56	4.55	4.24	4.53
Flexibility	4.70	4.85	4.63	4.44	4.65
Interpersonal relations	4.90	4.81	4.60	4.27	4.67
Emotional intelligence	4.96	4.67	4.44	4.58	450
Gratitude	4.33	4.13	4.42*	3.99*	4.27
Charisma	4.41*	4.00*	4.39*	4.46*	4.31
OVERALL	4.44	4.41	4.52	4.44	4.46

*Denotes statistically significant difference.

There was some variability among the respondents from different parts of the world. For the leaders from the United States, they agreed most strongly with items of Emotional Intelligence ($\bar{x}$ = 4.96), Interpersonal Relations ($\bar{x}$ = 4.90) and Digital Literacy ($\bar{x}$ = 4.87). For the European leaders, the highest mean scores were for the items of Digital Literacy ($\bar{x}$ = 4.94), Flexibility ($\bar{x}$ = 4.85), and Crisis Management ($\bar{x}$ = 4.83). Indian leaders agreed most strongly with Teamwork ($\bar{x}$ = 4.88) Discipline ($\bar{x}$ = 4.78), and Data Driven Decision Making ($\bar{x}$ = 4.75). And, the leaders from Asia agreed most strongly with Teamwork ($\bar{x}$ = 4.92), Digital Literacy ($\bar{x}$ = 4.90), and Discipline ($\bar{x}$ = 4.89).

4.2. Activity Responses

The second section of the survey included 10 faculty related activities and asked presidents to rate their agreement that the activity was fundamental for them (as leaders) to promote on their campus. As a group, the highest mean scores were for Applied Research ($\bar{x}$ = 4.78), Basic Research ($\bar{x}$ = 4.76) and Academic Service ($\bar{x}$ = 4.72). All three of these highest agreed to items reflected traditional academic responsibilities.

Globally, US leaders agreed most strongly with Campus Involvement ($\bar{x}$ = 4.88), European ($\bar{x}$ = 4.91) and Indian ($\bar{x}$ = 4.87) leaders agreed most with Applied Research, and Asian leaders had the highest mean for Classroom Teaching and Basic Research (both $\bar{x}$ = 4.86). The activity with the lowest mean agreement was for Public Service ($\bar{x}$ = 3.96), which was also the lowest for each of the different groups of respondents (see Table 2).

Table 2. Activity [To what extent do you agree (5 = Strongly Agree; 1 = Strongly Disagree) that the activity listed is fundamental for higher education leaders to promote on their campus?].

	US *n* = 62	European *n* = 47	India *n* = 89	Asia *n* = 31	ALL N = 229
Teaching-classroom	4.55	4.43	4.80	4.86	4.65
Teaching-community	4.51*	4.20	4.13*	4.44	4.27
Teaching-continuing education	4.43	4.01	4.00	3.98	4.10
Service-public	4.20*	4.00*	3.84*	3.89*	3.96
Service-academic	4.84	4.75	4.62	4.80	4.72
Service-professional	4.75	4.83	4.53	4.41	4.62
Research-applied	4.77	4.91	4.87	4.43	4.78
Research-action	4.46	4.63	4.77	4.32	4.58
Research-basic	4.78	4.90	4.67	4.86	4.76
Involvement-campus	4.88*	4.82*	4.44*	4.00*	4.57
OVERALL	4.60	4.54	4.46	4.38	4.49

*Denotes statistically significant difference.

4.3. Priority Areas

The third section of the survey included 13 priority work areas for higher education leaders. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement that the item was fundamental to higher education leaders. As shown in Table 3, the most agreed upon priority areas were institutional vision ($\bar{x}$ = 4.87), institutional mission ($\bar{x}$ = 4.86), academic programs ($\bar{x}$ = 4.84), and students ($\bar{x}$ = 4.83).

Globally, leaders in the US agreed most strongly with the areas of focusing on students (4.88), responding to internal stakeholders ($\bar{x}$ = 4.86), and responding to external stakeholders (4.84). European leaders agreed most strongly with vision ($\bar{x}$ = 4.95), focusing on students ($\bar{x}$ = 4.93), and mission ($\bar{x}$ = 4.91). Indian leaders agreed most strongly with caring for academic programs ($\bar{x}$ = 4.94), mission ($\bar{x}$ = 4.90) and vision ($\bar{x}$ = 4.89), while Asian leaders agreed most strongly with mission ($\bar{x}$ = 4.96), vision ($\bar{x}$ = 4.93), and financial commitments ($\bar{x}$ = 4.83).

4.4. Additional Analysis

A Multiple Analysis of Variance was conducted on the data by survey section, with significant differences identified in each (Sig. 0.000, $p < 0.005$). In the first section of the survey on soft skills, 9 skill areas were found to have significant differences. These included Indian leaders had a significantly higher mean for

Table 3. Priorities identified for higher education by leaders [To what extent do you agree (5 = Strongly Agree; 1 = Strongly Disagree) that the priority work area listed is fundamental for higher education leaders?].

	US *n* = 62	European *n* = 47	India *n* = 89	Asia *n* = 31	All N = 229
Vision	4.82	4.95	4.89	4.93	4.87
Mission	4.75	4.91	4.90	4.96	4.86
Financial commitments	4.00*	4.53*	4.75*	4.83*	4.50
External stakeholders	4.84	4.82	4.77	4.80	4.79
Internal stakeholders	4.86	4.70	4.61	4.66	4.69
Students	4.88	4.93	4.82	4.71	4.83
Faculty	4.86	4.44	4.37	4.49	4.52
Staff	4.49*	4.27	4.09*	4.11	4.23
Academic programs	4.76	4.81	4.94	4.82	4.84
Co-curricular	4.37	4.30	4.20	4.25	4.26
Employers	4.78	4.49	4.65	4.56	4.63
Parents/guardians	4.67*	4.06*	4.11*	4.20	4.25
Public at large	4.79	4.51	4.23	4.33	4.44
OVERALL	4.66	4.58	4.55	4.57	4.58

*Denotes statistically significant difference.

Time Management ($\bar{x}$ = 4.30), Oral Communications ($\bar{x}$ = 4.57), and Charisma ($\bar{x}$ = 4.39) than the European leaders ($\bar{x}$ = 4.01, $\bar{x}$ = 4.19, and $\bar{x}$ = 4.00, respectively). For the leadership promoting activities, four significant differences were identified, including between Indian and US and Asian leaders for faculty teaching in the community (US and Asian were both significantly higher with means of 4.51 and 4.44 as compared to 4.13). All groups of leaders were significantly higher than the Asian faculty for faculty involvement on campus, US faculty were significantly higher than all others for faculty teaching continuing education and for faculty providing public service. And for the third section of the survey data, US faculty were identified as significantly lower in the priority of financial commitments, but were significantly higher than European and Indian leaders for the priority of parents/guardians. US leaders also had a significantly higher mean for the priority of staff as compared to leaders from India.

5. Discussion

These findings illustrate the complexity of both leadership and higher education, and underscore some of the global differences that might be identified in higher education management. For example all leaders had high mean ratings for the soft leadership skill of digital literacy, representing a consistency for the industry. But, US leaders had high mean scores for the priority of working with faculty and staff, perhaps recognition of the shared governance tradition within the US.

Regional differences were identified throughout the study and reflect not only the attributes, values, and approaches to education in those countries, but also perhaps the connectivity of the academy to its publics. All regions provided strong support for connecting with employers, but the US was significantly higher in terms of providing priority to parents. Interestingly, the US leaders had the lowest mean level of agreement with the priority of financial commitments, with the Asian higher education leaders being most in agreement with that priority.

All of these ratings provide a good initial starting point for a larger conversation about what commonalities exist across higher education throughout the world and how those commonalities are being reflected in leadership beliefs, characteristics, and behaviors. These data may actually provide an initial baseline for some thinking about leadership soft skills, for example, and how institutions that focus on student development exist and thrive in an increasingly commercial world.

6. Implications for Leadership

Based on the study findings, there are several implications for both the study and implementation of leadership within the higher education context.

First and foremost, there are many similarities across geographic and national boundaries, and this illustrates that leadership is a global skill that has many si-

milarities based on the industry that is higher education. These similarities should be capitalized upon, and there may be transnational leadership development programs, exchanges, and discussions that help to better bridge regional thinking and global expectations about what higher education's future holds.

Second, the similarities in leadership soft skills suggests that perhaps there could be a greater exchange of leaders across national boundaries to inject new thinking and new ways of thinking about the state and future of higher education. Many of the demands placed on the academy are decidedly regional or national, but the demands of working with students and engaging faculty may well transcend this regional thinking.

Third, there are some identified differences in terms of the leadership activities and priorities identified in the study, and further inquiry should be directed at better understanding them. The priorities of parental engagement or the financial demands of the institution could lead to larger conversations about the roles of public and private investment in higher education and how confounding variables might be shaping the collective future of the academy.

Lastly, the response rates by college leaders suggest that there is an interest in global higher education leadership. Further research and scholarship that engages leaders collectively may well provide important skill set development and the identification of new leadership skills as the world economies, and educational institutions, further integrate in the future.

7. Conclusion

The study identified that college leaders from around the world, defined as college presidents, have many commonalities in their perceptions of the soft skills, institutional activities, and priorities for their work. Although there were differences identified in each of these areas, there were more commonalities than differences, meaning that many of the challenges and responses that institutional leaders identify might have applicability to other countries. These findings also reinforced the relational leadership aspects of the college presidency and underscored the perceived importance of leaders focusing on organizational mission and vision.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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