GENDER AND HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP:
RESEARCHING THE CAREERS OF TOP MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME ALUMNI

Summary Report

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Acknowledgements

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This research was not intended in any way to be seen as an evaluation of the Top Management Programme. The report presents the views of the research participants as interpreted by the research team, who take full responsibility for its content and recommendations.

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Foreword by Professor Janet Beer

This research was conducted with women and men who occupy some of the most senior roles in British higher education. It gives us hard evidence to support the contention that it is more difficult for women to be appointed as the chief executive in our universities and colleges. Whilst it is true that some of the participants – both men and women – are clear that they do not wish to be considered for the ‘top job’, of those who do, women are less likely to fulfil their ambitions and indeed, their potential.

Based on the research, the report makes significant recommendations, some of which are already under discussion in a variety of sector bodies, but which need to be rapidly progressed. The importance of achieving more gender balanced Governing Councils and Boards has already been highlighted by research conducted by Norma Jarboe for her Women Count report. The researchers here believe that equality and diversity training for those bodies, as well as the development of a code of practice for Executive Search Firms, are vital components of the changes needed to achieve truly meritocratic selection and recruitment. In the private sector targets have been set to achieve more balanced Board membership. Important work is also being done by the 30% Club, supported by KPMG and YSC, to dispel the myths about the reasons for women’s under-representation at senior levels by advocating the ‘dismantling’ of ‘structural barriers’ both to address bias and provide the kinds of professional development opportunities that will enable more women to progress in their careers. The researchers of this report, led by Professor Simonetta Manfredi, are equally ambitious in their recommendations for our sector; nothing less than a major commitment is required of us. This is not a question which is marginal; until we accept that it is a mainstream not a minority issue then nothing will change.

Janet Beer is Vice-Chancellor at Oxford Brookes University and Chaired the steering group for this research project.

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1 Cracking the Code, research sponsored by the 30% Club, KPMG and YSC
Foreword by Professor Colin Riordan

That only 17% of UK vice-chancellors and principals in the UK are women is nothing short of scandalous. Universities should be beacons of diversity and equality, and yet lag behind every other sector except the judiciary.

While more than half of the undergraduate population and 44.5% of academics are female, only 20.5% of professors are women. For a number of years the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education has run the Top Management Programme (TMP), which aims to prepare members of higher education senior leadership teams for the top job. Fourteen of the 29 female heads of institution in this country are graduates of TMP, which seems to indicate that it is of benefit in this respect. Yet the proportion of female vice-chancellors has remained stubbornly low, despite the undoubted merits of TMP (which I can vouch for as an alumnus myself).

The real scandal, however, is that this state of affairs so often goes unremarked. In the private sector the Davies report has led to a shake-up in appointments to company boards. My hope is that this report could give higher education a similar impetus. A code of practice for executive search firms, using existing equality legislation to the utmost, reforming promotions and talent management procedures, training and developing members of governing boards: all these measures could bring much-needed change. Why is it much needed? Universities should be setting an example in equal rights and showing that gender equity can become a reality.

There is evidence that more diversity at board level leads to better decision-making and better outcomes. We cannot afford to waste talent in this way: the argument is barely disputed where widening participation for students is concerned. We must ensure that the same is true for senior leadership teams in higher education institutions.

Colin Riordan is President and Vice-Chancellor Cardiff University.
A note about this report

This summary report presents the key findings from this research and sets out a list of evidence-based recommendations. A full report of this study is also available online and it contains: An executive summary; a literature review; details of methodology and research design; a full account of the research findings; conclusions; recommendations and a list of appendices which include the research instruments. The full report is available from the Leadership Foundation website on www.lfhe.ac.uk/en/research-resources/published-research/2014-research.cfm

Abstract

This project researched the career trajectories of senior leaders in higher education who are alumni of the Leadership Foundation’s Top Management Programme (TMP). The research explored alumni’s experiences of how their gender, ethnicity, disability, etc. may have influenced their career paths; and highlights factors that may have facilitated or hindered their career progression. A variety of institutional locations, academic and professional career paths and demographic characteristics were explored over the course of the study as well as the process of nomination for the TMP.

Background and aims of the project

The paucity of women as vice-chancellors (17%)2, professors (20.5%) and in senior management roles across the higher education sector (27.5%)3, in spite of the high proportion of women working in the sector, is being publicly questioned. In 2012 the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (Leadership Foundation) commissioned a stimulus paper, written by Professor Louise Morley and published in 2013, to encourage discussion on women and leadership in higher education. One of her recommendations was to undertake research into “the enablers and impediments that women experience in career progression, and into the experience of women leaders”. Increasing the number of women appointed as vice-chancellors and to other leadership roles in higher education has been identified as a priority by the Leadership Foundation6 and Equality Challenge Unit (ECU7).

In April 2013 these two bodies commissioned the Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice at Oxford Brookes University, in partnership with Learning for Good, to undertake research to track the career trajectories of a sample of women and men who attended the Leadership Foundation’s TMP. TMP alumni were the focus for the research as these individuals represent a sample of some of the most senior leaders in UK higher education institutions (HEIs). The broad aim of the research was two-fold: to map the career trajectories of TMP alumni and to investigate gender and other diversity issues among a group of women and men who have spent significant periods of their career in senior management and leadership roles. The specific aims and objectives of the research were to:

• Map the career trajectories of TMP alumni with a focus on gender from a variety of institutional locations, professional backgrounds and demographic characteristics, including ethnicity and disability (where known).
• Explore the experiences of TMP alumni, in particular their view and experiences of how their ethnicity, disability, gender, etc. may have influenced their career paths.
• Highlight factors that may have facilitated or hindered the career progression of TMP alumni.
• Explore gender and issues around motherhood, gendered subject areas and other factors that may or may not impact on career ‘choice’.
• Examine the process of nomination and follow-up to TMP in a selected sample of institutions

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2 Jarboe (2013)
3 At present, there are no publically available HESA figures on the gender of VCs. Monitoring has started, however, and these figures will be available from HESA in due course.
4 ECU (2013)
5 Morley (2013) p16
6 See interview with the Chief Executive, Dr Mark Pegg, Morgan (2013)
7 See ECU strategic plan 2014 – 2016 ‘Illuminate, articulate, champion and transform www.ecu.ac.uk/about-us/our-strategy-2014-16 For further information about the TMP see Appendix 1 and www.lfhe.ac.uk/tmp
8 This is an area that due to small numbers of participants involved in different subject areas we were not able to explore in a meaningful way in the survey. Moreover, the findings from the interviews did not highlight any significant issue relating to gendered subject areas. The findings from this research (and other relevant projects) will continue to be fed into the new programme.
TMP

The TMP is the Leadership Foundation's flagship programme and has an established track record in developing strategic leaders in higher education. In 2013 the TMP was remodelled to reflect the changing needs of the sector.

Fifty-seven of the current UK vice-chancellors/chancellors are TMP alumni (14 females and 43 males), with many of the other past participants of TMP holding some of the most senior posts throughout higher education. A recent study on Leaders in Higher Education reported that currently there are 29 female vice-chancellors and principals in the UK. On the basis of this figure 14 of these female vice-chancellors (VCs) are TMP alumni, which represents 48% of all female VCs/principals in the UK.

Project methodology

A mixed method approach was adopted which encompassed quantitative and qualitative methods and it was articulated in two main stages:

Stage one: A comprehensive literature review was undertaken which sought to integrate a number of perspectives by drawing from different strands of literature to include studies on the gendered construction of leadership, gender and careers and broader diversity issues in higher education. The review highlighted the importance of understanding the complexities underlying women's careers and barriers to promotion, and taking a systemic, multi-strand approach to policy interventions to address the barriers. It also highlighted the role of social identity in constructing the role of the leader, and pointed out the challenges that may be faced by leaders who are not part of the 'in-group'. Our own perspectives on the research literature include a resistance to essentialist discourses around perceived gender differences in leadership.

The literature review was complemented by a series of focus groups with TMP alumni to enable the research team to explore the range and variability of alumni views on topics drawn from the research brief and to develop the research instruments for the second stage of the project. Alumni who volunteered to take part in these discussion groups were also offered an opportunity for networking and reviewing the benefits of action learning sets from TMP.

Stage two: This involved the development of two online surveys: one aimed at TMP alumni, and one aimed at nominating managers. The overall aim of the survey for the TMP alumni was two-fold: to map alumni's career trajectories and identify themes relating to their career path and experiences to be investigated in more depth through one-to-one interviews and to secure a diverse sample of alumni to be interviewed. For reasons of data protection and confidentiality it was not possible to access equality-related personal characteristics of TMP alumni using the existing data base held by the Leadership Foundation. Thus, the only way to construct a diverse sample of interviewees, and capture possible issues raised by the intersection of different equality characteristics was to ask, via the questionnaire, for self-disclosure and whether survey respondents would be prepared to take part in an interview.

The first online survey was sent to 465 contactable alumni. A total of 183 responses were received representing almost 40% of the total sample. This was followed up by 42 interviews with a sample of 23 women and 19 men. This group was selected by taking into account a number of factors such as equality-related personal characteristics, career patterns, and leadership roles. To investigate the nomination process an online survey was sent to nominating managers, typically vice-chancellors and principals, who are non TMP alumni. The survey for TMP alumni included an optional section for those who were nominating managers, as well as TMP alumni themselves.

Out of 124 nominating managers who were not also TMP alumni 19 responded to the survey (representing 15% of the total sample). This was followed up by 12 one-to one interviews with nominating managers, some of whom had attended the TMP and some of who had not attended, but were accessed through the survey of nominating managers.

9 For further information about TMP programme see Appendix 1 and www.lfhe.ac.uk/tmp
10 The findings from this research (and other relevant projects) will continue to be fed in to the new programme.
11 Jarboe (2013)
12 Although to date there are over 600 alumni the Leadership Foundation currently holds valid contact e-mail addresses for 465. This may be due to the fact that some alumni might have retired or moved to different sectors or abroad.
The profile of respondents

Gender
The demographics of survey respondents are similar to what is known about TMP alumni generally. The proportion of male to female alumni who responded to the survey was respectively 55% and 45% - roughly similar to that of the total cohort of alumni (42.8% women and 57.2% men based on a total of 612).

Ethnicity
In terms of ethnicity, 95.5% of respondents were white and 3% described themselves as being from a black and minority ethnic (BME) heritage (1.7% preferred not to say). This proportion is slightly lower than that of all BME alumni of the TMP (4%). It should be noted that this is still higher than the proportion of UK BME senior managers in the whole of the higher education sector currently, which is just 1.2%.

Age
The age profile shows a younger profile in favour of women (25% were in their 40s compared with 19% of men).

Figure 1 TMP alumni survey respondents age profile split by gender

Other equality related characteristics
Very low levels of disability were reported, well below the overall proportion of self-reported disabled senior managers working in the higher education sector which currently stands at 2.8%. It is not clear why levels of disability were so low in our sample, but it could be explained by a number of reasons. These may include reluctance to disclose a disability or long term health condition; lack of understanding that some conditions, such as degenerative illness, fit the legal definition of disability; the likelihood that it is still difficult for a disabled person to achieve a very senior position or simply the lack of disabled people in our sample.

Disclosure of other equality related characteristics was also very low and due to the small numbers involved, these figures are not included in this report in order to protect participants’ confidentiality.

13 ECU (2013)
14 ECU (2013)
Table 1 Respondents’ roles at the time of the survey\textsuperscript{15}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current job role</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VC or Principal</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy VC</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro VC</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registrar</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Professional Services</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other roles (including communications)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of responses 183

Key points to note in relation to the occupational roles of the sample are:

- A significantly higher proportion of women (14%) were in registrar roles than men (5%).
- A higher proportion of women (19%) were in director of professional services roles (e.g. HR, finance, marketing, etc), than men (2%). These results are likely to reflect the fact that a much higher proportion of women (58.2\textsuperscript{16}) in the sector work in professional services.
- The proportion of male and female respondents in pro-vice-chancellor (PVC) roles was almost equal (28% women and 23% men).
- There was a significant drop in the proportion of females at deputy-vice-chancellor (DVC) level (13% women and 23% men) and at vice-chancellor (VC) level (10% women and 18% men).
- All the VCs and principals in our sample had an academic background, except one male, who had a professional one.
- Of the 45 respondents in PVC roles, only two (one of each gender) had a career background in professional services.
- Of the 32 respondents in DVC roles, only four (two men and two women) were from professional services backgrounds.

\textsuperscript{15} Please note that for confidentiality reasons and to respect the wishes of some of the participants actual numbers have not been included in this table
\textsuperscript{16} ECU (2013)
Summary of key findings

Career success, enablers and constraints and the role of TMP

Definitions of career success among our respondents are not limited to promotion. For several, TMP helped them to see that they did not wish to take on a more senior role, and broadened their horizons in different ways. However, among those in the sample who had applied for more senior roles since completing TMP, women were less likely to be successful than men.

Enabling factors in relation to career success included personal factors such as: support from families, determination, flexibility and willingness to challenge behaviours; education and professional qualifications such as accountancy which helped people to feel “financially confident” in a leadership role; positive influences of others such as line managers, role models and peer support; professional development and being able to see “the bigger picture”. The survey results show that women are more likely than men to consider that ‘opportunities for training and development’ helped them in their careers.

Nearly half of our female survey respondents felt they had experienced gender-related bias in their careers, and interview respondents talked of a gendered view of leaders among colleagues and selection panels. Cultural and class bias had also been experienced, and respondents without an academic background felt that this factor had constrained their careers.

There is unease about the role of executive search firms in appointments to senior roles.

There were no significant gender differences about the types of personal qualities and skills that participants in this study felt had helped them most in a leadership role. Most cited personal qualities including hard work; emotional intelligence; self-confidence, determination, enthusiasm; resilience, perseverance and commitment; honesty and fairness.

The skills and experience most cited included: people skills and caring for staff; good communication skills; experience of having worked in different institutions, in different roles and across-disciplines; taking up projects and opportunities and networking.

Career progression

- Half of the male respondents (51.1%) and almost half of the females (47.3%) were appointed to more senior roles within higher education after attending TMP.
- Almost equal proportions of male and females (34% and 36.5% respectively), had stayed in the same role as they held when they attended TMP.
- A significant proportion of females (21.6%) compared to men (8.5%) had unsuccessfully applied for more senior roles in higher education.

Statistical testing of the last of these results showed that the women in our sample were more likely to be unsuccessful when applying for more senior roles in higher education. Further analysis comparing the group of women who were successful in applying for more senior roles after attending TMP with those who were unsuccessful, indicated that the latter were more likely to consider ‘lack of career advice’, ‘lack of career planning’ and ‘limited opportunities to change employer’ as constraints on their career development.

While the proportions of men and women in PVC roles among survey respondents were about equal, the proportion of women at more senior roles was much lower. It is difficult to draw conclusions about the differences between the proportion of males and females in DVC roles since it is not clear what the relative status of PVC/DVC is in different HEIs in terms of seniority. Nonetheless, these findings show a significant drop between the role of PVC and VC/principal. This both suggests that something is happening to women’s careers at/above PVC level specifically, and reinforces that there is a question to be asked about whether women at senior levels are more likely to be unsuccessful in their applications for new roles – and, why this might be the case.

17 A Chi-square for independence test was run to test whether females were more likely to be unsuccessful when they applied for senior roles in HE and the result confirmed this hypothesis ($X^2(1)=4.78, P=0.029$).
18 By isolating the data from the female participants, another independent sample t-test was run to understand if any constraints are perceived differently among the career development status group in the female sample (e.g. successful v unsuccessful). Three constraints were shown to have a significant difference: ‘lack of career advice’($t(39)=-2.90, p=0.006$); ‘lack of career planning’($t(40)=-2.99, p=0.005$); ‘limited opportunities to change employer’($t(23)=-2.69, p=0.013$).
Selection and recruitment processes

Some of the women included in our sample of interviewees raised concerns, to a different degree, about gender bias in the selection and recruitment process for leadership roles. Some felt, for example, that leadership is "too narrowly defined in contemporary higher education" and that it does not acknowledge that there are different ways of leading. This raised questions as to whether "the women who do breakthrough have to sacrifice so much of themselves in the process". There was also a perception among women that appointing panels have a gendered view of leaders: "I think moving into this role for the first time I kind of felt that this was perhaps affecting my chances. Some people couldn't see me in the role". Concerns were expressed about the lack of diversity in terms of both gender and ethnicity in senior jobs, which can result in a 'cloning' effect in the selection and recruitment process for leadership roles.

These concerns were echoed by some of the nominating managers (both men and women) when discussing the reasons for possible blockages which militate against increasing diversity in the sector: "many of the selections are made by white haired ageing middle class men". These views resonate with existing academic literature which highlights the fact that management is still associated with 'being male' and that both men and women still hold implicit associations about men and leadership.

Several interviewees of both genders, but predominantly women, questioned the role of executive search firms (ESFs) in the selection and recruitment process for leadership roles. There was a widespread perception among interviewees (both men and women) that ESFs have too much influence on the recruitment process for these roles, that overall they are not helping to increase diversity in these posts and instead contribute to reinforcing the status quo. In particular it was noted that although women tend to represent between 20% and 30% of applicants in the 'long list', not enough of them seemed to be making it onto the shortlist. There was speculation that this may be the result of a tokenistic approach at long-list stage to promote gender diversity; and/or that ESFs may be advising women to apply for unsuitable positions. Questions were raised as to the degree of influence exercised by ESFs on decisions relating to the shortlisting process. Conversely a few interviewees had a positive experience of ESFs. As the evidence about ESFs came from the interviews alone the numbers are relatively small. This area is likely to be heavily influenced by personal experiences, whether positive or negative.

Cultural and other biases

Similar issues to gender bias in leadership roles were raised in relation to cultural bias, which, in a few cases, appeared to intersect with both gender and ethnicity. This intersection of different characteristics can create a more subtle and deeper type of disadvantage unlikely to be experienced by other groups (e.g. white men and women) and which is difficult to pinpoint with concrete examples. However, a number of instances were reported such as ethnic background being a problem especially when applying for senior roles "and all of a sudden your standard of English is being questioned"; being excluded from conversations or not being appointed because of being seen as "not fitting with the rest of the team". It was also highlighted that people in different cultures may be used to practising a more modest style of leadership which does not fit with the assertive Western approach. There was a sense that there is "unspoken racism" which is difficult to tackle if it is not identified and that it is hard for BME leaders to identify racism openly: it was noted that there is a reluctance to raise issues about race, especially at senior level.

Other barriers and constraints experienced by TMP alumni included: lack of academic qualifications for those who joined higher education either from the health or performing arts sectors (most of whom were women); lack of role models especially female ones; and social class. This final point was raised by a few men who felt it more difficult to be accepted in an academic environment because of their working class social background or to have "legitimate aspirations to an academic career, let alone academic leadership". Women were more likely than men to cite three constraining factors: 'lack of confidence'; 'childcare responsibilities'; and 'limited opportunities to change employer'. Academics of both genders were more likely than other professional groups to cite 'lack of mentoring' as a constraint.

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19 Berthoin Antal and Izraeli (1993); Valian (1999); Alimo-Metcalfe (2007); Kandola, (2009); ECU (2013a)
20 A report published by the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (Sweeney, 2014) has recommended greater transparency in the way ESFs operate and that they should publish data about women put forward for company board roles.
21 Bhopal (2014 Forthcoming) looks into this topic in more detail.
Discrimination

Thirty-six out of 79 women who responded to the survey (46%) indicated that they had received less favourable treatment. Incidents reported by women included discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, pregnancy, and marital status, and occurred mainly in relation to promotion and opportunities to take on more management responsibilities. The findings from the interviews showed that several women believed that they had received less favourable treatment especially in relation to their marital status (e.g. not being promoted because as married women they were seen as less financially deserving compared to their male colleagues who had families to provide for). However, these incidences of direct sex discrimination had happened mainly in the past whereas more recent incidents related to age discrimination. The combination of age and gender could work to exclude women from leadership positions as they were positioned either as being too young and female and therefore lacking “credibility” or as the ‘older woman’: “I’m the past, not the future and that’s very challenging”.

Thirty-two out of 97 men who responded to the survey (33%) indicated that they had received less favourable treatment primarily because of their age, lack of religion, nationality or sex (this latter related to a perceived positive discrimination in favour of female candidates). The findings from the interviews showed that most instances where men believed that they had been treated less favourably related to age and being seen as too young to be promoted. This however, happened in the early stages of their career and the respondents believed that such behaviour is “fading away”.

Early years: The development of identities

We asked all interviewees to describe their early years in order for us to understand their social class backgrounds and sense of personal identity. We found that many of our respondents were from lower middle-class or working-class backgrounds, had strong values about the importance of education, appreciated the opportunities they had had, and were influenced by their upbringing to wish to bring those opportunities to others.

Over half of the interviewees in our sample were the first generation in their family to attend university. Thirty out of a total of 42 attended state schools, a few left with no A levels and accessed higher education as mature students. Most of the women in our sample of interviewees were the first generation in their family not only to go to university but also to pursue a career.

Many of the interviewees of both genders were born in working class or lower middle class families in rural areas. Most of their parents valued education and had high aspirations for their children even if they themselves had limited education: “I’m from [X] which is an area of considerable social and educational deprivation....[from] a very large family...We were encouraged to pursue ambitions and have successful careers” (female). For several interviewees positive influences from families and teachers were crucial aspects that helped them to develop their sense of themselves and their values.

The majority of the interviewees went to university straight from school. A few of both genders engaged with higher education through less conventional routes and did degrees as mature students. These experiences made them realise the importance of “the recognition of diversity of education both in terms of need and in terms of how people engage with higher education...” and of “different access routes” into higher education. Contrary to the belief that higher education is populated with people from a narrow class stratum these accounts suggest that our sample of alumni came from diverse social backgrounds.

22 The accompanying long report contains more detail about these findings, which are reported briefly here.
Career trajectories and key turning points

In our interview and survey samples, most academics had pursued a typical linear academic career. Women were over-represented among those whose professional identities did not have an exclusively academic or higher education focus. Typically, people in this category had experienced more variety in their careers and there was a perception that such career trajectories make it harder to achieve the very top jobs. From the interviews it became clear that the transition to a leadership role (and to developing a leadership identity) had been a challenging phase for many. Mobility between institutions was not considered to be an essential factor in career development for academics or those in professional services - many of those we interviewed had progressed into very senior roles whilst remaining at the same institution.

A significantly higher proportion of men (61%) had conducted the whole of their careers in the higher education sector as academics, than women (36%). By contrast, a significantly higher proportion of women (70%) developed their entire career in professional services within higher education than men (26%). A higher proportion of women (59%) had also joined professional services roles in higher education after having spent a period of time in their earlier careers in other sectors (e.g. private or public) compared to 41% of men.

Table 2 Type of Career Trajectory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career type and typical age</th>
<th>Total no. of respondents</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Not known</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic career, including lecturing/research, mainly in higher education except perhaps in their ‘20s’</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early experience outside the higher education sector (eg commercial or public sector), then professional services role in higher education</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always in higher education (except perhaps in their ‘20s’) in various professional services roles</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late academic, with lecturing/research, beginning from age 36+</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early commercial/public sector role, then academic role, then returning to commercial/public sector role</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Percentages not provided because of low numbers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic, but now outside the higher education sector</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Percentages not provided because of low numbers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early academic role, then commercial/public sector role, then returning to higher education sector</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Percentages not provided because of low numbers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Academic careers

Most of the academics of both genders pursued what could be described as a ‘typical’ linear academic career which started with moving from a PhD to a post-doctoral position and then to their first academic job. No significant gender differences emerged from this analysis, contrary to the belief that women tend to have more ‘atypical’ career trajectories due to interruptions for career breaks to look after children. Given the very specific nature of this sample and the very senior roles they inhabit this is not necessarily a finding which would be replicated among other samples in higher education. It is possible (although beyond the remit of this study) that women with necessarily ‘atypical’ and interrupted careers would find it very difficult to progress into senior management roles – and that may be why few of them have been visible in this sample. For almost all respondents the key turning point into management happened when they were appointed head of department. Several of them, both men and women, moved into these roles as they were “spotted and asked to apply for a head of department job” and that was “the trigger point” that took them “down the road of academic leadership”.

Experiences of transition from an academic identity to a leadership one pointed to the importance of having “to re-imagine yourself as capable of being the next thing”. This has been noted in the literature on career theory, which suggests that imagining future “possible selves” in the next role can shape aspirations23.

Some interviewees felt that contemporary research-led careers which tend to be entirely focused on an individual’s publications and other research outputs are almost “the antithesis” of what is required to be a successful leader. This is because a leadership role is about “how to create an environment in which other people can achieve things, rather than how you can achieve them”. Some experienced a tension between maintaining an identity as a researcher while in a leadership role: “I don’t consider myself a serious researcher anymore”; “So there’s always going to be the pressure around maintaining some academic career to fall back on”.

Professional services careers

TMP alumni with a background in professional services had experienced more varied career trajectories compared with academics. These in some cases involved long periods of work in other sectors ranging from industry, the armed forces and the public sector before joining higher education. A number of interviewees took further academic qualifications while in employment and several women had a background in librarianship. Others started their career in higher education and had a steady progression along administrative routes. This involved a less linear career path and some side moves into different roles (e.g. library services, student services, finance, registry).

The perceived importance of an academic background

Overall the findings for this group show that the wide range of functions existing in HEIs can attract a professionally diverse group of people who can bring different skills and expertise to higher education. While, on the one hand, this can be a positive factor for HEIs and enhance their way of working, our findings are that not having an academic background is perceived by interviewees in this group as a barrier to progression into leadership roles. This was echoed by nominating managers: “in my view it is hard, but not impossible to find people who can be successful if they have not done a solid academic job”.

Nonetheless, our sample included both a man and a woman with a previous career in professional services who are now respectively in a VC and PVC role, although they acknowledged that it was not “an easy transition”.

Case study ‘J’

Overcoming barriers

‘J’ has a service/professional background and describes how she found it difficult to be seen as a credible candidate because she lacked an academic background:

“*A major barrier has been my professional services background. I think universities find it very hard to believe that somebody from the sort of background I’ve got can be a senior executive in a university. If you’ve taught Geography you can be a VC, but if your experience is in the management and leadership of professional services, you can’t. After deciding that I’d like to move into an executive level position I applied for quite a lot of posts and struggled to get onto short lists. The feedback was that my experience was “limited”. A reflection, I believe of bias and lack of understanding regarding senior professional service roles. Ironically, I was approached by a significant number of head hunters in Australia and New Zealand, but I decided the domestic upheaval was too great. In the UK…[if] you don’t come from an academic background you don’t seem have the credibility. So, that I think is the only real barrier I’ve faced*.”

J then explained what steps she took to overcome this barrier:

“*I went to see the VC when I was at [name of institution]...and said I would appreciate his views on whether he believed I was capable of moving into an executive role. I told him that I was keen to move up and would appreciate his feedback and his help in doing so. He gave me a really positive response and, most importantly, arranged for me to be seconded onto the University’s Executive to lead a major change programme. He also put me forward for TMP and that gave me the beginnings of a broader network and an understanding of a different web of influence, which was really helpful. I also made efforts to engage in a much broader range of professional associations, to widen my understanding and networks. I have always published accounts of professional practice in my field and have contributed to conference papers, seminars etc. as well as being on national committees and groups where possible. I think it helps your own practice, it is interesting and I think it helps on the CV and with personal credibility in academic institutions. I also had some coaching… I’ve taken opportunities to have personal coaching over the last 5 years or so which I think helped me think things through…. [a professional coaching expert] actually helped me a lot with my application for my current role and with the way that I presented myself, which I think probably just tipped the balance for me.*”

Moving institutions

Evidence about the need to move institutions in order to progress on the career ladder was mixed. Some female interviewees felt that their lack of mobility because of family commitments was a constraint that hindered their career progression, and lack of mobility was also evident as a perceived constraint in the survey. Others, however, including men, had been working for the same institution for a long time or had made relatively few moves and this did not seem to have had a negative impact on their career:

“... [I] stayed here for 20 odd years... my big university career has been to help build this place up to what it is now”.

Moves to other institutions typically were prompted, when promotion could not be gained internally. These changes also involved some movements between different mission group universities. Career moves from Russell Group universities to other mission groups were not uncommon but the reverse seemed to be. In a few cases interviewees were not prepared to leave Russell Group universities even if this limited their chances of progressing their career into a leadership role.

The role of TMP

The role of TMP in respondents’ careers included giving them access to wider networks of colleagues outside their own institutions (60% of women and 70% of men cited this as the most significant benefit), and the opportunity to benchmark their own leadership against that of others, often through the action learning sets (“generally testing myself against senior colleagues whom I admire and respect”); a chance to reflect on their values and careers; improved confidence and focus; and greater clarity about the nature of senior leadership roles, leading in some cases to a determination to move into such roles and in other cases to a decision to move sideways or stay put.
Career planning

No significant gender differences emerged from the analysis of approaches to career plans or lack of career plans. Most respondents did not think that they had planned their careers, but many did in fact have clear goals and were able to take opportunities as they arose. There is little experience of formal, structured career support.

It is often suggested that men are more likely than women to plan their careers. However, most of our interviewees, of both genders, said that their careers were largely unplanned and often a matter of luck or being in "the right place at the right time". As some reflected back on their careers, a number of recurrent themes emerged which appear to have influenced their career decision-making process. These included being driven by a clear goal, such as for example wanting to become a professor; being skilled lateral thinkers and able to seize opportunities; having entrepreneurial attitudes and being willing to get involved with major management change processes and restructuring; and above all passion and belief in the importance of higher education: "the enormously strong sense that I adored teaching and that I thought education was really important has kept me going".

A few interviewees raised lack of career advice as an issue: this was also identified as a possible constraint in the survey, where it was particularly cited by those who applied unsuccessfully for more senior roles following TMP.

Some interviewees felt that dual career couples had to be "pragmatic" about career plans, recognising that children/family demands alongside two careers mean that something has to give. For some there were times when one has to question the centrality of careers, emphasising the importance of broader involvement and work-life balance over and above career progression alone. The latter resonates with the later 'reinvention contribution' stage of women's careers identified by O'Neil and Bilimoria24.

Career journeys and families

As might be expected, a much higher proportion of our female respondents had significant other responsibilities outside work compared with male respondents. Typically women, especially those in academic roles, had taken short periods of maternity leave, had had little or no access to flexible working, and had experienced balancing work and family as a challenge albeit one they felt had enriched them as people and as leaders, and that they would not have wanted to forgo.

- Survey results indicated that 61% of women had 'significant other responsibilities' outside work, compared with 21% of men.
- Just over half of women (42 out of a total of 79) reported that childcare responsibilities, to different degrees, have been a 'constraint' to their career development compared to less than a third of men (29 male respondents out of a total of 97).

The findings from the interviews confirmed that experiences of combining childcare and other family caring responsibilities were differentiated along gender lines. Most of the women in our sample had to shoulder family responsibilities while several men had wives or partners who took primary responsibility for childcare: "the fact that she was prepared to do that [looking after the children] enabled me to pursue my career unfettered...". There were however, a few exceptions: some women had husbands/partners who took the role of primary careers and either worked part-time or gave up their jobs and followed them around in their career moves. Similarly there were a few men who had chosen to share childcare responsibilities equally with their partners.

Most female academics took short periods of maternity leave25 ranging from three to six months. This was partly because they felt that longer periods could have a negative impact on their careers: "I don't think in an academic world you could take a significant career break... you would find it very hard to get back into an academic environment, particularly in a research intensive university"; and partly because their work and professional identity were important to them. There was also a sense that retaining their professional identity made them feel better mothers: "I instantly became a better mother when I … went back to work".

24 O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005)
25 It should be noted here that maternity leave 'entitlements' at the time many of the respondents were making use of them were also a lot shorter. For an update on the current legislation see www.gov.uk/employers-maternity-pay-leave
All the women with children in our sample had little or no access to flexible working arrangements. It was clear from their accounts that at the time when they had young families their working environments were constructed as a ‘care free zone’\textsuperscript{26}: “it was just quite simply you do not mention it that you’ve got a family, you get on with it because it is your choice”. It was noted however that working environments in higher education have become much more family-friendly and that flexible working is more available. It was highlighted that acknowledging women’s childcare responsibilities and making allowances for them especially in the context of research outputs and career progression were important, as expectations in terms of work performance in higher education have become much more demanding.

Among interviewees, opinions as to whether childcare had made an impact on career progression were divided: some felt that it did not have much of an impact especially as they took a short period of maternity leave; whereas a few felt that it had slowed down their career although they did not resent it: “if I hadn’t had a family I would be a lot further on in my career but I would be much more impoverished personally by not having done that”.

There was overall consensus among female interviewees that combining childcare with careers was “hard work” which required a lot of planning and organisation. Some however, said that this balancing act made them better workers and helped them to build up resilience. This suggests that the interaction between family and work should not just be seen in terms of competing demands between the two different domains of work and private life, but it should also be seen in terms of possible enrichment between these two domains\textsuperscript{27}.

Case study ‘L’
Combining childcare with an academic career

After completing her PhD ‘L’ started a family and had five children. The flexibility of working part-time especially in the early part of her career was very important to her. Her working patterns varied from one to three days a week. At the time when L had her children in the 80s and early 90s there was very little support available for women taking maternity leave: “there was no risk assessment of working conditions, it was statutory maternity leave, there were no ‘back to work taster days’ or whatever they are called’. L was the only one in her department to work part-time as well as having small children.

When L was expecting her fourth child she recalls the reaction of a colleague when she announced that she was going to have another baby: “Oh..., how could you do this to the department?”. So despite being enabled to work part-time she felt that “there was the slight horror of this woman with so many children, and how could she possibly be a serious academic. One of the reasons I was so pleased to take on a Dean role was that it was great to get that far in the University, having had children. Other women have said to me that it’s been inspirational to realise that these things can happen”.

A big turning point in her career was when L was asked to take over the role of Head of Department. When she started this work she increased her three days a week to four. Eventually L went back to full-time work when she took over the role of Head of School; subsequently she was elected Dean and became part of her university senior management team.

L received a lot of support from her husband who works at home and was also helped by having some good support mechanisms in place like “a wonderful part-time nanny” who worked for her family for 10 years and living close to the university where she worked. Thus she described all these things as being “very much part of the package that made it possible for me to do what I’ve done”.

L’s experience of combining work and family made her realise “how important it is...to offer lots of support to younger people that are wanting to work, as well as look after young children. When I was a Dean I was very keen on finding solutions for those - it was nearly always women -wanting to work flexibly, with the support of HR, I have to say”.

\textsuperscript{26} Lynch (2010)
\textsuperscript{27} Greenhaus et al (2006)
\textsuperscript{28} Current legislation on maternity, adoption and paternity leave provides that employees while on leave they can work up to 10 paid days. These days are optional and they are called ‘keeping in touch days’. For more information see www.gov.uk/employee-rights-when-on-leave.
Work-life balance

Our interviewees, both male and female, tended to accept the workload involved in senior roles as an inherent feature of the jobs, and to treat the question of dealing with the workload as a personal challenge rather than an organisational one. This is not to say that they were comfortable with it.

In relation to general experiences of work-life balance in senior roles, responses from both male and female interviewees could be grouped in three main categories (gender was not a significant differentiating factor).

- **The boundaries between work and life appear to be almost entirely blurred.** This includes academics who derived a strong sense of self-worth from their work: “All of the excellent academics that I know work all the time because that’s what their passion is and that’s their choice”.

- **The ‘work and life dilemma’,** which includes people in senior roles both from an academic and from a professional background. These are people who struggle to achieve a work-life balance and feel that this is a problem: “if there’s one thing that I have to work really hard at and don’t think I’ve got it sorted yet, it’s that work/life balance”.

- **Clear boundaries have been drawn between work and personal life.** Those in this category felt that they have a “healthy work-life balance”. Some academics in this group highlighted that being in a senior management role actually helped them to improve their work-life balance compared to, for example, when one is a professor and “the demands upon you are very unstructured and it is very difficult when you are in that environment to balance your life”.

Some interesting observations were made about the role of technology and how it could either help or hinder work-life balance in senior management roles. On the one hand, it was highlighted that it could make it easier for people to work from home and avoid for example having to re-locate families. On the other hand, technology can make it really difficult to maintain the boundaries between work and private life: “in our senior team, we are just about all on the email on Sunday afternoon getting ready for the Monday morning”.

Some interviewees acknowledged that perceptions of leadership roles involving a “massive amount of work” could dissuade individuals, and especially women, from even applying for these jobs. However, several felt that it was in the nature of the work and hardly any of them seemed to be actively engaged in trying to question workloads and the long-hours culture which seems to exist at this level.

TMP selection processes

Nomination for TMP was done via formal processes such as appraisal for almost half our respondents, but a large minority were put forward following informal suggestions. Slightly more women than men asked to be nominated.

It was not clear to what extent equality and diversity considerations were taken into account in the nomination process. Only a small number of nominating managers clearly indicated that these considerations were included in the nomination process. Alumni and their nominating managers had similar views on the sorts of leadership qualities and experience required by senior leaders in higher education.
An examination of the TMP selection process was included in the research to help look at how individuals arrive on the programme, whether there are any equality issues in this process and what the actual (rather than formal) processes used by HEIs to identify potential attendees (and thus potential new leaders) are.

- Almost half of alumni (46.7%) who responded to the survey indicated that their nomination was formally discussed during appraisal/review.
- A significant proportion (29.8%) indicated that they had been nominated following an informal suggestion by a more senior colleague.
- Marginally more women than men said that they took the initiative to ask to be nominated.
- Over half (52%) indicated that they were nominated early on in a leadership role.

Some nominating managers had equality and diversity considerations in mind in their nomination process, nominating participants from under-represented groups or encouraging people from these groups to put themselves forward. Others did not consider equality and diversity specifically when making nominations, but confirmed that equalities considerations were on the agenda such as in recruitment and promotion processes.

**Leadership characteristics, experience and skills**
Nominating managers were asked both in the survey and in the interviews about leadership characteristics, experience and skills that they believed to be important in leadership roles. Their responses by and large reflected those given by the alumni when asked the same questions.

**Leadership characteristics** most mentioned included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>• Vision</th>
<th>• Communication skills</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Leadership ability</td>
<td>• Humility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confidence</td>
<td>• Being compassionate and approachable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Being able to think about the ‘big picture’</td>
<td>• Resilience and energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sharp intellect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Experience and skills** most mentioned included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>• Management experience outside the sector</th>
<th>• Experience of having run a large department or having worked in a pan-university role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Academic credibility</td>
<td>• International experience which could provide a global outlook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Increasing diversity in leadership roles: Views from TMP alumni and nominating managers

Diversity in leadership roles in higher education was still seen as poor by both TMP alumni and nominating managers. When asked to identify ways in which diversity in leadership roles might be improved, most were able to identify the entrenched problems. Fewer were able to put forward solutions or identify ways to act as agents of change.

Several interviewees identified appointment panels’ pre-conceptions about the type of people who would fit within the institution as a key problem: “people … think of leaders as males … there are assumptions that leaders have to fit certain models and this needs to be unpicked”.

Some located responsibility for change with individuals, who were often characterised as lacking in confidence or being constrained by caring responsibilities. It was highlighted that the Research Excellence Framework attempts to acknowledge childcare responsibilities. However, this is seen as “the tip of the iceberg” because “it makes allowances at the outcomes point”. A couple of interviewees pointed to the fact that promotion panels in their institutions have started to take these issues into account when making decisions about promotions: “we are pretty good at [x] in terms of promotions at looking at quality not quantity where there are personal circumstances”.

Addressing the ‘pipeline’ was identified as an important way of redressing the balance, for example, earmarking talented individuals in lower layers of management and encouraging them to take leadership training because “by the time you get to the senior team you are 20 years beyond the point where that selection genuinely started to happen…if gender and an ethnic imbalance is addressed at an early career stage there would be no subsequent challenges”.

When considering action that institutions may adopt, some participants were either unsure about or not in favour of positive action, though there was evidence of HEIs aiming to improve gender balance in other ways, for example, addressing a gender imbalance in the professoriate or introducing professorial appointments based on teaching and learning to provide an alternative avenue to those whose seniority would be based on the outstanding quality of their pedagogy. Other measures included mentoring to build confidence and highlighting role models to encourage more women to apply for more senior positions. Furthermore, externally-sponsored initiatives such as Aurora and Athena SWAN, for example, were seen as a useful way of providing more opportunities for women in lower management positions, though it was noted that there is no equivalent for providing BME staff with such opportunities.

Several participants highlighted the importance of work-life balance, and the role of workplace flexibility in helping women to progress. It was pointed out that perceptions of leadership roles involving a “massive amount of work” would dissuade individuals from even applying, highlighting, for example, a “macho email culture”.

Increasing the numbers of BME staff is seen as a more impenetrable issue than increasing the number of women.

There was some recognition that the sector needs to develop a stronger and more sophisticated understanding about the value and strength of diverse teams: though the evidence exists, the argument needs to be better articulated. The absence of references to other types of diversity other than gender or BME when discussing issues around diversity and leadership roles was striking.

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29. As referred to in the Equality Act (SS 158-159)
30. While this study was in progress the Leadership Foundation launched a new development programme called Aurora aimed at early and mid-career academic and professional women.
31. It should be noted here there is a leadership development programme, Stellar HE funded by Hefce entitled which is aimed at BME leaders in UK HE. [www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/whatwedo/leadershipgovernanceandmanagement/leadershipandgovernance/lgmfund/equalityanddiversity/LGM195_starletripor.pdf](www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/whatwedo/leadershipgovernanceandmanagement/leadershipandgovernance/lgmfund/equalityanddiversity/LGM195_starletripor.pdf)
Summary of Evidence and Recommendations

This section of the report summaries the research findings and set out a list of recommendations. It is hoped that these ideas will contribute to the debate within higher education to increase women's representation in leadership roles across the sector.

1. Perceptions of gender bias in selection and recruitment for leadership roles.

Evidence:

- Our survey results show that although the proportion of males and females in PVC roles in our sample is almost equal there is a significant gender gap in VC/principal roles which reflects the national trend at this level.
- Female respondents in our sample were more likely to be unsuccessful than men when applying for more senior roles.
- The perceptions and experiences of women who took part in the interviews point to the existence of possible gender and other forms of bias in selection and recruitment processes for senior appointments which may result in a 'cloning' effect of white male leaders.
- These perceptions were supported by comments made by some of the nominating managers.
- Furthermore, questions have been raised by participants as to whether the involvement of ESFs in the selection and recruitment process for leadership roles contributes to increase diversity or reinforces the status quo.
- All these findings strongly resonate with existing studies relating to the gendered construction of leadership and the role of ESFs in senior appointments in other sectors.

Recommendations

HEIs governing boards: These play a key role in the selection and recruitment for leadership roles, including VCs. However, research focusing on governing bodies showed that a limited number of HEIs offer equality training to governors. ECU and Leadership Foundation should develop and offer to members of governing boards and other key staff involved in making decisions about senior appointments, appropriate high level equality training with a focus on selection and recruitment for leadership roles to raise awareness and understanding of the equality implications relating to the design of job descriptions and selection criteria for senior posts. HEIs should make it a mandatory requirement for members of governing bodies and other key people to attend such training. Action: ECU and Leadership Foundation

Executive Search Firms: Develop a code of practice in collaboration with sector stakeholders, including ECU and Leadership Foundation to promote good practice and greater transparency about the role of ESFs in the selection and recruitment process for senior appointments. ESFs and their clients should aim for at least a 30% of female applicants on short-lists for leadership roles. Data on the proportion of female candidates put forward for senior appointments should be published. Action: ESFs, higher education sector bodies

Adopt positive action in recruitment and promotion: Provisions for positive action in the Equality Act (SS 158-159) permit (but do not require) employers to take into account a protected characteristic when deciding whom to recruit or promote where people having the protected characteristic are at a disadvantage or are under-represented and where the candidates are as qualified as each other. This is known as a ‘tie-break’ and the higher education sector should look at those experiences both in the UK and in other European countries where this and similar provisions to increase gender diversity have been used. It is important that such measures are not confused with ‘quotas’ and for the sector to have a debate about the use of such provisions and learn from other sectors that have used them. A similar debate is taking place in relation to increasing gender diversity on company boards following the introduction of a draft EU Directive requiring companies to achieve female representation of 40% on their boards. Although this Directive has not been adopted yet, such debate has helped to focus companies’ efforts to increase gender diversity. Action: higher education sector bodies

32 Anderson et al (2009) p52
Setting up aspirational targets and monitoring the pipeline: HEIs should set up aspirational targets (supported by measurable and realistic action plans) to increase diversity in senior management roles. Depending on which stages institutions are at, this might involve focusing on different layers of management in order to develop a sustainable pipeline. Such plans would also assist institutions to meet their equality duties and it should include on-going monitoring of applications for senior management roles, short-listing and success rates by gender and wherever possible by other equality characteristics. Action: HEIs

Monitoring career trajectories: It is recommended that processes are set up to allow for the monitoring of career trajectories of TMP and Aurora alumni and to identify role models. Action: Leadership Foundation

2 Constraining factors for career development and progression.

Evidence:
The survey’s results show that female respondents who have been unsuccessful in applying for more senior roles in higher education were more likely to identify ‘lack of career advice’, ‘lack of career planning’ and ‘limited opportunities to change employers’ as constraining factors to their career progression.

- ‘Childcare’ and ‘lack of confidence’ were also more likely to be identified as constraints by all female respondents.
- Combining work with childcare was especially identified as an issue in the early stages of careers.
- Both male and female academics were likely to consider ‘lack of mentoring’ as a constraint to their career development and progression.
- There is a perception that the absence of an academic background can be a barrier to progress into the most senior leadership roles. The survey’s results showed that save for very few participants all respondents in PVC, DVC and VC and principal roles had an academic background. Although this issue was highlighted by both males and females who participated in this study, these findings point to a risk of gendered occupational segregation since women are over-represented in the professional services occupational group.

Recommendations

Mentoring: Institutions should consider offering academic staff access to mentoring programmes throughout their career, since these can help to boost confidence and provide a source of career advice and guidance. Examples of good practice in developing and managing mentoring programmes can be found in a comprehensive publication on mentoring in higher education produced by ECU and accessible on their web-site. Action: HEIs.

Support for staff with childcare and other caring responsibilities: It is important to offer flexible working to help staff to combine their work with childcare and other caring responsibilities, at different stages of their careers. The Children and Families Act 2014 introduces provisions for shared parental leave, and the right to request flexible working to all employees. Guidance could be provided by ECU to help HEIs consider the implications of the provisions of the Act in the higher education context. Action: ECU and HEIs

Take into account equality-related circumstances in academic promotions: The principles established by the Funding Councils through their equality guidance for REF 2014 to take into account how equality-related circumstances might have impacted on quantity of research outputs (not quality) in selecting staff for inclusion should be adopted when making decisions about academic promotions. This could help to increase the number of female professors and professors from other under-represented groups. Action: HEIs

Professional services career routes: HEIs should review career routes for this group of staff which tends to be a higher percentage of women, to ensure that they are able to progress in leadership roles. It is important to focus on competencies and transferable skills which are actually necessary for leadership roles to ensure that staff in this group are not overlooked or disadvantaged in selection and recruitment processes for these roles. Action: HEIs
3. Enabling factors for career development and progression.

Evidence:
- Both the survey’s results and the findings from the interviewees indicate that opportunities for taking management responsibilities, undertaking cross-institutional work, and opportunities for external exposure/responsibilities were considered factors which helped with career development and progression.
- Development of social capital through networking was also highlighted as a key enabling factor.
- With specific regard to gender ‘opportunities for training and development’ these were shown to be most valued by women.
- The evidence shows that most respondents’ experience was of very informal arrangements for career support, with few formal systems and little transparency. Opportunities for new experiences, including formal leadership development, tended to arise through informal conversations and ‘taps on the shoulder’.

Recommendations

Facilitate access to opportunities for taking management responsibilities, cross-institutional work and external exposure:
Institutions should maximise opportunities for internal mobility by mapping out functions and responsibilities that could provide stepping stones to senior management roles and ensure that they can be accessed through a transparent process. This may also include the use of secondments and assignment to specific projects. Ensure a balanced representation of women and wherever possible other equality groups on committees and especially those operating on a cross-institutional basis. Women may be encouraged through personal development plans to take up external roles, either within the higher education sector (e.g. involvement with research councils) or with other sectors. **Action: HEIs**

Talent management and access to leadership development:
Institutions should adopt clear criteria, which include equality considerations, to identify and nominate staff for leadership programmes. These criteria and the type of opportunities available to staff both internally and externally should be clearly communicated to staff at different stages of their careers. **Action: HEIs**

4. Lack of equality discourse in leadership programmes.

Evidence:
- The findings from this research highlighted that save for a few exceptions most of the participants in this study did not seem to be pro-active in promoting equality and diversity in relation to career planning and promotion in their institutions or across the sector in spite of being in roles where they could exercise significant influence on the equality agenda.

Recommendations

Integrating equality in leadership development programmes: There is a need for leadership development programmes at different levels to integrate equality and diversity in their curricula and to encourage future leaders to think how they can make a difference in this area (as Aurora has begun to do). There is also scope to promote better understanding of cross-cultural issues as there is a high proportion of international staff in higher education. **Action: Leadership Foundation, ECU**

5. Work-life balance issues in leadership roles.

Evidence:
- The research findings show that there is still a belief that leadership roles are ‘greedy work’, i.e., involve excessive work demands, and this may deter some people, especially women, from applying for these jobs.
- However, the evidence also suggests that staff in these roles have a significant amount of control and autonomy about how they organise their work and some of them have managed to achieve a ‘healthy work-life balance’ as opposed to others who find that work-life balance is an issue in these roles.

Recommendations

Tackle work-life balance issues in leadership programmes: Include in leadership programmes discussion on work-life balance issues. Draw on existing research about the role of technology and the future of work to explore positive ways in which technology can enable work-life balance rather than hinder it. Also identify examples of good practice and role models at this level both in higher education and in other sectors where similar challenges are experienced in senior roles. **Action: Leadership Foundation**
References


Appendix 1 – TMP

About TMP
The Top Management Programme is the Leadership Foundation’s flagship programme and has an established track record in developing strategic leaders in higher education. 57 of the current UK vice-chancellors/principals are TMP alumni, with many of the other past participants of TMP holding some of the most senior posts throughout higher education.

TMP is intended to be challenging, providing an opportunity to broaden perspectives and to act as a force for change at institutional, personal and professional level. It is designed to provide long-term benefit to the university or higher education college.

At the time of writing, the Leadership Foundation is recruiting to the 34th run that will begin in October 2014. The programme is targeted at vice-chancellors/principals, chief executives, pro vice-chancellors/vice-principals, executive deans with cross institutional responsibility, heads of university administration and directors of professional services.

Participants in TMP require the full support of the institution/organisation and the vice-chancellor/principal or CEO. Already leading a significant area of operation at their institution, they must also be a member of their university or higher education colleges’ senior management team. The programme requires that they are acknowledged as having the potential to reach the highest position within higher education or beyond the sector. All TMP participants are expected to bring a strategic overview of higher education, a personal commitment to extending their learning and the willingness to enhance their career. The programme thrives on all participants’ commitment and contribution to a productive learning community within the programme.

TMP takes place twice a year a year, with 21 participants in cohorts starting in spring and autumn. The programme runs across three weeks, over a six month period. Starting with a one-day orientation briefing, week one focuses on Leading for Organisational Impact, week two, the international week, takes place outside of the UK, and includes a group assignment. The final week, focuses upon Effectiveness Across and Beyond the Institution. Within the programme participants are allocated to impact groups to work through a challenging work-based issue, and there are also coaching sessions that take place between the official weeks of the programme.

At the end of their TMP run participants become members of the TMP alumni, currently at over 600 members, and continue to benefit from a vibrant support network and other alumni activities organised by the Leadership Foundation.

www.lfhe.ac.uk/tmp
Biographies

Simonetta Manfredi is Professor of Equality and Diversity Management and Director of the Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice at Oxford Brookes University. Her research interests include gender issues in careers, work-life balance, age discrimination and retirement policies with a focus on the higher education sector and she has published and led several externally funded projects on these topics. Her book on Managing Equality and Diversity (co-authored with Dr.Kumra), published by Oxford University Press, received the Charted Management Institute Management Book of the Year Award 2013 (under the management and leadership category). In 2011 she received the outstanding paper award by the Emerald Publisher for her article (co-authored with Professor Liz Doherty) on Improving Women’s Representation in Senior Positions in Universities.

Dr Felicity Cooke has been a Consultant at Equality Practice since 2010. Formerly, she was Head of Equality at the University of Oxford and prior to that at the University of Cambridge. Her skills include the ability to translate legislative requirements into live and effective practice and transforming compliance into active delivery of equality outcomes. She works on policy design and implementation, and consultation (interviews and focus groups). She has a deep understanding of the process of culture change in organisations, with particular expertise in women's development, and in unconscious bias. Since establishing Equality Practice she has undertaken equality projects for Equality Challenge Unit, the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, the Royal Society and the University of Oxford.

Dr Louise Grisoni is Associate Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange in the Business Faculty at Oxford Brookes University. Louise’s passion for research falls into the broad field of Organisation Studies. She has developed an international specialism in aesthetics and art-based approaches to research inquiry into a range of organisational phenomena including leading and managing change, leadership, equality and diversity. She has published widely on gender, leadership and equality issues in organisations in a number of academic journals such as: Journal of Management Learning, Organisation and Management Journal and Gender, Work and Organisation. Her career prior to entering higher education was in management development in the Health Service. During her academic career she has been involved in a range of executive development projects for both public and private sector clients including: IBM, Sainsbury’s PLC, Newbury Building Society, Bristol Social Services and Wiltshire County Council.

Dr Karen Handley is a Reader in Organisation Studies at Oxford Brookes University Business Faculty. Her research interests include individuals’ expectations and experiences of work and ‘careers’. She has undertaken a number of externally funded projects including a recent 18-month study funded by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales investigating the career aspirations and planning horizons of graduates from eight HEIs across England. More recently, her research on career trajectories has oriented towards older workers, given the significant challenges and opportunities ahead for this group and she has been awarded funding by the British Academy to undertake work in this area. Before entering academia, Karen worked in the financial services industry and as a principal consultant for PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Rebecca Nestor is director of Learning for Good Ltd, a consultancy focusing on the educational and charitable sectors. Formerly Associate Director of the Oxford Learning Institute, with responsibility for leadership development at the most senior levels in the University of Oxford, she has over twenty years of senior experience in staff development and equality and diversity in higher education and in the public sector. Since 2009 she has been Associate and Regional Co-ordinator, South-East and East of England for the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. In this capacity she holds the following responsibilities: co-director for Preparing for Senior Strategic Leadership; ad-hoc consultancy to HEIs; keeping in touch with HEIs in the two regions; providing support and improving communication between the Leadership Foundation and its member institutions; improving take-up of Leadership Foundation provision in the two regions. Between November 2011 and February 2012 she was also Interim Director of Programmes for the Leadership Foundation.