



# Journal for the Study of Postsecondary and Tertiary Education

An Official Publication  
of the Informing Science Institute  
[InformingScience.org](http://InformingScience.org)

[JSPTE.org](http://JSPTE.org)

Volume 4, 2019

## SETTING A NEW GLOBAL AGENDA: LEARNING FROM INTERNATIONAL APPROACHES TO HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

---

Russell S. Thacker*	University of Idaho, Boise, ID, USA	<a href="mailto:thac2014@vandals.uidaho.edu">thac2014@vandals.uidaho.edu</a>
Sydney Freeman, Jr.	University of Idaho, Moscow, ID, USA	<a href="mailto:sfreemanjr@uidaho.edu">sfreemanjr@uidaho.edu</a>
Daniel Campbell	University of Idaho, Moscow, ID, USA	<a href="mailto:dcampbell@uidaho.edu">dcampbell@uidaho.edu</a>

\* Corresponding author

### ABSTRACT

---

Aim/Purpose	This paper establishes a research agenda for learning from global approaches to higher education as a field of study by encouraging research into new methods and practices in leadership development from emerging scholars and practitioners around the world.
Background	Significant growth has occurred in the number of academic programs, research centers, and scholars serving in the field of higher education in the last two decades. This presents an opportunity to expand methods and practices in a new and global direction.
Methodology	Conceptual essay
Contribution	We identify the need to expand research on higher education as a field of study beyond national and Western constructs.
Findings	Several specific initiatives, resources, and potential research areas for future scholars are discussed, including curricular, pedagogical, and programmatic best practices and internal and external leadership development programs in higher education.
Recommendations for Practitioners	By adopting best practices in leadership development from other national or regional settings, faculty who prepare higher education leaders can inspire innovation in their leadership development programs and reach diverse audiences.
Recommendations for Researchers	Researchers in the field of study of higher education can use recently available resources to access global perspectives on the study of leadership development in higher education.

Accepted as an opinion and rapid response essay by Editor MaryBeth Walpole | Received: August 20, 2019 | Revised: November 7, December 6, 2019 | Accepted: December 9, 2019.

Cite as: Thacker, R. S., Freeman, S., Jr., & Campbell, D. (2019). Setting a new global agenda: Learning from international approaches to higher education leadership development. *Journal for the Study of Postsecondary and Tertiary Education*, 4, 299-306. <https://doi.org/10.28945/4469>

(CC BY-NC 4.0) This article is licensed to you under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/). When you copy and redistribute this paper in full or in part, you need to provide proper attribution to it to ensure that others can later locate this work (and to ensure that others do not accuse you of plagiarism). You may (and we encourage you to) adapt, remix, transform, and build upon the material for any non-commercial purposes. This license does not permit you to use this material for commercial purposes.

Impact on Society	The development of professional leaders in higher education is critical to the future of social and economic development. Understanding the innovative approaches utilized by other countries for higher education leadership development can improve leader preparation efforts everywhere.
Future Research	A concise research agenda is set forward for future scholars and practitioners.
Keywords	higher education as a field of study, leadership development, international higher education

## INTRODUCTION

---

As the global growth of higher education continues – from 100 million students in 2000 to over 200 million currently (UNESCO, 2017) – the need for effective higher education leaders and administrators is increasing. The continued expansion and maturation of higher education worldwide depend on professional leaders and administrators with specialized skills and knowledge to guide their institutions (Wright, 2007). However, knowledge of best practices in higher education leadership development remains largely confined to national or regional borders and rooted in Western approaches (Teichler, 2014). The significant growth observed in academic programs, research centers, and scholars around the world engaged in the study of higher education (Rumbley et al., 2014) offers an opportunity to learn from other countries about their approach to leader preparation and open a more globally-oriented dialogue on higher education as a field of study.

This article is situated in two ongoing developments in higher education: the emergence of higher education as a distinct field of study and the increasing internationalization of the study and practice of higher education. Both developments stem from the rapid growth of postsecondary education over the last century and reflect the increasingly complex higher education landscape of the twenty-first century. The convergence of these areas presents an opportunity to learn important new methods and practices in higher education leadership development.

### *HIGHER EDUCATION AS A FIELD OF STUDY*

When G. Stanley Hall offered the first course on higher education to aspiring academic leaders at Clark University in 1893, he “envisioned a professional area of study that focused on educating and training academic professionals who understood university life, policies, and practices from national and international perspectives” (Goodchild, 2014, p. 3). Hall’s early efforts expanded through scholars at various institutions in the first half of the twentieth century who began pursuing research and formal preparation activities for leaders in academia (Dressel & Mayhew, 1974). Booming enrollments of the post-World War II era in the United States created further interest in the professional study of higher education and training of its leaders (Fife, 1991). Eventually, a new classification of scholars termed “higher educationists” emerged who made the study of higher education the focus of their professional lives (Cowley, 1969; Freeman, Hagedorn, Goodchild, & Wright, 2014b; Hobbs & Francis, 1973).

However, as research interest in higher education increased, challenges of defining this field also arose. Dressel and Mayhew (1974) argued higher education was beginning to meet the criteria for an academic field of study but did not have an intellectual core. It lacked the general body of knowledge, theoretical frames, specialized vocabulary, or common methodologies and techniques found in other fields of education and remained ill-defined. Similarly, Fife and Goodchild (1991) suggested scholars had “struggled to create a definable body of knowledge” (p. 1) of the field and reissued the call for the better understanding and equipping of professionals who work in higher education.

In the last fifteen years, significant strides have been made to define higher education as a field of study and to work toward guidelines of curriculum and principles for preparing leaders. Wright and Miller (2007) proposed a set of knowledge domains, skills, and competencies for academic leaders,

including decision-making, evaluation, resource allocation, leadership, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving. National higher education bodies have begun to consider guidelines for certain types of academic programs. In 2010, the Association for the Study of Higher Education's (ASHE) Council for the Advancement of Higher Education Programs (CAHEP) approved a set of curriculum guidelines for master's programs in higher education within the United States (Goodchild, 2014).

More recently, scholars have built upon the efforts of Wright and Miller (2007), CAHEP, and others by improving the clarity of curriculum standards and design practices of higher education leadership preparation programs. Freeman, Hagedorn, Goodchild, and Wright (2014a) proposed a set of guidelines for terminal higher education doctoral degrees. Freeman and Kochan (2014) established a theoretical framework for higher education academic programs emphasizing the importance of balancing theory and practice, accounting for student choice, and demonstrating accountability for student learning. Freeman, Chambers, and Newton (2016) further identified the need for more systematic and forward-looking approaches to curriculum planning in leadership development programs.

These works and guidelines form a growing knowledge base for the field of higher education. Fife (1991) stated, "Higher education programs are evolving from a generalized area of inquiry into a curriculum of professional specialization" (p. 86). However, progress remains to be made in defining the field and determining common curricula, methodologies, and approaches to leader preparation. A key area of advancement is understanding emerging global perspectives previously unknown in the field.

### ***INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION***

Internationalization has been apparent in numerous facets of higher education for decades, such as institutional partnerships, exchange programs, international students, overseas campuses, and other initiatives (Proctor & Rumbley, 2018), yet its impact on the field of study of higher education has emerged more slowly.

A persistent challenge of scholarship on the internationalization of higher education is the prevailing perspectives of Western or industrialized nations. Altbach (2016) observed, "Higher education, as a field, is significantly unbalanced. Most of the research and publication reflects the realities of the industrialized nations, despite the fact that most growth is taking place in developing and middle-income countries" (p. 19). According to an analysis by Proctor (2016), 53% of research on international higher education between 2011 and 2014 was focused on industrialized nations. Works by Proctor and Rumbley (2018), Wright and Freeman (2014), Freeman (2016), Wang (2010), and Altbach (2016), have identified the need to open research on higher education preparation programs to more global perspectives.

De Wit, Gacel-Ávila, Jones and Jooste (2017) began to correct this imbalance by analyzing alternative paradigms on the globalization of higher education from a variety of countries. They suggested that significant new insights to improve the practice of education were possible by examining other countries' models of education. For example, they recommended scholars look at how developing countries adopt internationalization in their higher education curriculum and programs. Even though the trend is toward the homogenization of many practices, such as the use of English and common research methods, countries in the developing world often adopt international practices for purposes of social responsibility to their local contexts rather than simply to increase global competitiveness (Jones, de Wit, & Gavel-Ávila, 2017). Thus, when institutions in developed countries enter into partnerships with the developing world, significant lessons can be learned from their partners. "As countries in the developing world open up to internationalization and enter into partnerships with western institutions, their reflections on practice and outcomes offer significant learning opportunities for those with longer histories" (Jones et al., 2017, para. 3).

Scholars have begun investigating global practices of higher education on an individual country or regional level. Kehm's (2015) research on Europe, Varghese's (2017) profile on India, Wang's (2010)

focus on China, Jung's (2015) work on Korea, and Azman and Sirat's (2017) portrayal of higher education in Malaysia are examples of such research. Though limited in scope, these studies have demonstrated that important comparative insights can be uncovered by examining various national or regional contexts. For example, Kehm (2015) concluded that when compared to European approaches, the American approach to developing leaders for the field of higher education tends to have a strong "problem" focus yet lacks a theoretical foundation. In other words, because the research of American scholars of higher education is so often tied to third-party funding, U.S. scholars must continually emphasize "the relevance of their research for policy-makers and researchers" (Kehm, 2015, p. 61). Thus, problem-oriented research tends to favor policy, governance, strategy, and decision-making research in response to environmental conditions. This is consistent with Bastedo's (2012) critiques of the current state of higher education research in the United States as overly-focused on external dynamics such as public policy and institutional rankings while more local topics like teaching and organizational culture have been minimized. Meanwhile, theoretical approaches to the study of higher education have been limited, leading U.S. scholars to rely on theory adopted from other fields and disciplines (Thacker & Freeman, 2019).

Many diverse and innovative practices for leader development are in use around the world which, if understood, could enrich higher education leader preparation efforts everywhere. For example, Wang (2010) found that most U.S. higher education academic programs offer the same six primary courses – administration, curriculum, finance, history, higher education law, and community colleges; whereas, academic programs in many countries are increasingly incorporating non-academic skills such as business management, communication, conflict resolution, and financial and legal training into their pedagogy (Center for International Higher Education [CIHE], 2014). Reflective of these new desired competencies, some countries such as Australia have moved higher education centers into management schools and created higher education Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs (Altbach, 2016). Similarly, U.S. programs have been found to predominantly consist of coursework-based structures leading to graduate degrees (Kehm, 2015), while other countries offer higher education programs at the undergraduate level, and some, such as the United Kingdom, have robust higher education apprenticeship programs in place of coursework (Parker, 2017). In some national contexts, government agencies provide formal training, such as the National Academy of Educational Administration of China that offers courses and seminars of various lengths (Altbach, 2016). It is now possible to understand many new pedagogical and curricular approaches to developing higher education leaders.

Literature from non-higher education fields such as management or government offers an example of how we can learn from other cultural perspectives on leadership. For example, leaders from Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and much of Latin America have been found to have more collaborative and consensus-driven approaches to leadership than Western models (Chamorro-Premuzic & Sanger, 2016). This approach increases decision-making time, but results can be more synchronized and have more stakeholder buy-in. The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) research program (House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002) compared the leadership practices of managers from 61 countries and identified ten distinct cultural clusters in which substantial differences exist in leadership philosophy. GLOBE scholars concluded that leaders from various cultural backgrounds are most likely to adopt the implicit leader behaviors and norms favored in their country. Thus, in an increasingly diverse workplace, cross-cultural leadership will become more necessary.

International or comparative work offers numerous benefits to higher education researchers. Teichler (1996) detailed many obstacles to comparative work, including cost, language barriers, and lack of understanding of context. However, Teichler argued that comparative research remains a necessary undertaking because of its ability to "deconstruct assumptions about the general and universal nature of certain phenomena" (p. 397). For example, what might be commonly understood and taken for granted as "students" or "courses" or "universities" in a U.S. perspective may hold much different

meaning abroad. Teichler (2014, p. 398) also stated comparative studies are “goldmines” for identifying new practices we have not previously known.

Research into these practices is facilitated by recent developments in organizing the global field of higher education. In 2000, the Center for International Higher Education (CIHE) began publishing a global inventory of research centers, academic programs, and journals and publications focused on the study of higher education. Its most recent edition, authored by Rumbley et al. (2014), is a recognized directory in the field and contains information on 277 higher education administration programs in 29 countries and 217 research centers across 48 countries. It details significant shifts in the growth of the study of higher education. From 2006 to 2014, the number of countries with research centers, academic programs, or journals in higher education administration more than doubled, from 25 to 56 (Rumbley et al., 2014). Forty-seven of the 60 new academic programs in higher education formed since 2000 are outside the United States. For instance, higher education academic programs now exist on the African continent in Mozambique, Uganda, Egypt, and South Africa, and research centers are increasing in South America in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Venezuela (Rumbley et al., 2014). Greater parity now exists between the United States and the rest of the world in the study of higher education. In addition, in 2013, CIHE convened a policy roundtable of higher education scholars from 22 countries on the need for improved cross-national research and professional training in the higher education enterprise. The resulting “Shanghai Statement” calls for increased focus on training for higher education professionals and proposes both formal and informal initiatives to improve collaboration among global actors in the field (CIHE, 2014).

### ***FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA FOR GLOBAL STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION***

As de Wit et al. (2017) and others have indicated, we see a need to seek additional perspectives on higher education preparation programs from a global set of scholars and practitioners. While Rumbley et al. (2014) and other scholars have pinpointed locations of rapid growth in the training of higher education leaders, we see significant work to be done in the identification of specific methods and best practices emerging from these locations for developing higher education leaders.

Many areas of potential learning in higher education leadership preparation are worth in-depth study. These include understanding best practices in curriculum development such as learning outcomes, the disciplinary origin of content, and pedagogical approaches. For example, lecture and case study method are common in the U.S. context but may be less utilized in other settings such as the U.K. where research apprenticeship programs are used in place of coursework (Parker, 2017). Additionally, research could look at the roles of institutionally-based initiatives in leadership development such as seminars, workshops, and leadership academies, as well as informal leadership development approaches such as mentoring programs. Of particular interest may be understanding the role of external leadership development programs offered through private, non-governmental, or governmental entities at the country and regional levels. Finally, studying other countries’ use of data in learning assessment and the evaluation of long-term program goals may yield significant insights.

In approaching these questions, we also find it helpful to employ an approach similar to Harper’s (2010) work on anti-deficit frameworks for students of Color in higher education. Harper’s work helped to reframe thinking regarding the abilities of students of Color to start with the assumption of ability, rather than deficit. Similarly, when learning from other countries’ approaches to leadership development, we can also ask what cultural assets or ways of thinking other countries can bring to our understanding of effective leadership development.

De Wit et al. (2017) argued that the innovation occurring in peripheral countries will become more and more central to shaping the global future of higher education. Similarly, Freeman (2016) shared, “we cannot afford for our scholarship to continue to be Western-centric and need to engage with wider international discourses and developments” (para. 8). It will be increasingly important for faculty and leadership development practitioners in the field of higher education to seek opportunities

and conduct research to learn about the ways in which a range of other countries prepare their leaders. Knowledge of global approaches is more accessible than ever, and our thoughtful pursuit of these perspectives will greatly improve our preparation of leaders for challenges of the future.

## REFERENCES

---

- Altbach, P. (2016). *Global perspectives on higher education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Azman, N., & Sirat, M. (2017). Higher education as a field of study in Malaysia: Towards an epistemic community of practice. In J. Jung, H. Horta, & A. Yonezawa (Eds.), *Researching higher education in Asia* (pp. 245-264). Singapore: Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4989-7\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4989-7_14)
- Bastedo, M. N. (2012). Organizing higher education: A manifesto. In M. N. Bastedo (Ed.), *The organization of higher education* (pp. 3-17). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Center for International Higher Education (CIHE). (2014). The need for research and training for the higher education enterprise: The Shanghai statement. *International Higher Education*, 74, 2-3. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2014.74.5460>
- Chamorro-Premuzic, T., & Sanger, M. (2016, May 6). What leadership looks like in different cultures. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2016/05/what-leadership-looks-like-in-different-cultures>
- Cowley, W. H. (1969, June). Dawn of higher educationists. *College and University Business*, 61-64.
- De Wit, H., Gacel-Ávila, J., Jones, E., & Jooste, N. (Eds.). (2017). *The globalization of internationalization: Emerging voices and perspectives*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315657547>
- Dressel, P., & Mayhew, L. (1974). *Higher education as a field of study: The emergence of a profession*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fife, J. D. (1991). Course offerings in higher education doctoral programs. In J. D. Fife & L. F. Goodchild (Eds.), *Administration as a profession* (pp. 77-86). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. <https://doi.org/10.1002/he.36919917608>
- Fife, J. D., & Goodchild, L. F. (Eds.). (1991). *Administration as a profession*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Freeman, S., Jr. (2016, January 4). *The under-realized potential of higher education as a field of study within and beyond the U.S.* [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://aeradivisionj.blogspot.com/2016/01/the-under-realized-potential-of-higher.html>
- Freeman, S., Jr., Chambers, C., & King, B. R. (2016). *The important role of institutional research in academic program development: New directions in institutional research*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.20162>
- Freeman, S., Jr., Chambers, C., & Newton, R. (2016). Higher education leadership graduate program development. In S. Freeman, Jr., C. Chambers & B. R. King (Eds.), *The important role of institutional research in academic program development: New directions in institutional research* (pp. 79-89). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Freeman, S., Jr., Hagedorn, L. S., Goodchild, L. F., & Wright, D. A. (2014a). *Advancing higher education as a field of study*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Freeman, S., Jr., Hagedorn, L. S., Goodchild, L. F. & Wright, D. A. (2014b). Introduction and overview. In S. Freeman, Jr., L. Hagedorn, L. Goodchild, & D. A. Wright (Eds.), *Advancing higher education as a field of study* (pp. 1-11). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Freeman, S., Jr., & Kochan, F. (2014). Toward a theoretical framework for the doctorate in higher education administration. In S. Freeman, Jr., L. S. Hagedorn, L. F. Goodchild, & D. A. Wright (Eds.), *Advancing higher education as a field of study* (pp. 145-168). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Goodchild, L. F. (2014). Higher education as a field of study: Its history, degree programs, associations, and national guidelines. In S. Freeman, Jr., L. S. Hagedorn, L. F. Goodchild, & D. A. Wright, (Eds.), *Advancing higher education as a field of study* (pp. 13-50). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Harper, S. R. (2010). An anti-deficit achievement framework for research on students of color in STEM. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2010(148), 63-74. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.362>

- Hobbs, W. C., & Francis, J. B. (1973). On the scholarly activity of higher educationists. *Journal of Higher Education*, 44(1), 51-60. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1980625>
- House, R., Javidan, M., Hanges, P., & Dorfman, P. (2002). Understanding cultures and implicit leadership theories across the globe: An introduction to project GLOBE. *Journal of World Business*, 37(1), 3-10. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-9516\(01\)00069-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-9516(01)00069-4)
- Jones, E., de Wit, H., & Gacel-Ávila, J. (2017, Feb 26). Internationalization innovation is coming from the developing world [Blog post]. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/world-view/internationalization-innovation-coming-developing-world>
- Jung, J. (2015). Higher education research as a field of study in South Korea: Inward but starting to look outward. *Higher Education Policy*, 28(4), 495-515. <https://doi.org/10.1057/hep.2015.18>
- Kehm, B. (2015). Higher Education as a field of study and research in Europe. *European Journal of Education*, 50(1), 60-74. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12100>
- Parker, S. (2017, September 20). The UK is rethinking university degrees and Australia should too [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/the-uk-is-rethinking-university-degrees-and-australia-should-too-82973>
- Proctor, D. (2016). The changing landscape of international education research. *International Higher Education*, 84(Winter), 19-21. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2016.84.9115>
- Proctor, D., & Rumbley, L. E. (Eds.). (2018). *The future agenda for internationalization in higher education: Next generation insights into policy and practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Rumbley, L., Altbach, P., Stanfield, D., Shimmy, Y., de Gayardon, A., & Chan, R. (2014). *Higher education: A worldwide inventory of research centers, academic programs, and journals and publications*. Bonn: Lemmens Media.
- Teichler, U. (1996). Comparative higher education: Potentials and limits. *Higher Education*, 32(4), 431-465. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00133257>
- Teichler, U. (2014). Opportunities and problems of comparative higher education research: The daily life of research. *Higher Education*, 67(4), 393-408. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-013-9682-0>
- Thacker, R., & Freeman, S., Jr. (2019, November). *Toward a theory of the study of higher education*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Portland, OR.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific, & Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2017). Six ways to ensure higher education leaves no one behind. *UNESCO Digital Library*. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247862>
- Varghese, N. V. (2017). Education research and emergence of higher education as a field of study in India. In J. Jung, H. Horta, & A. Yonezawa (Eds.), *Researching higher education in Asia* (pp. 299-313). Singapore: Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4989-7\\_17](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-4989-7_17)
- Wang, X. (2010). *Higher education as a field of study in China defining knowledge and curriculum structure (Emerging perspectives on education in China)*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Wright, D. (2007). Progress in the development of higher education as a specialized field of study. In D. Wright & M. Miller (Eds.), *Training higher education policymakers and leaders: A graduate perspective* (pp.17-32). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Wright, D., & Miller, M. (Eds.). (2007). *Training higher education policymakers and leaders: A graduate perspective*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Wright, D., & Freeman, S., Jr. (2014). The future of higher education administration preparation program guidelines and their implementation. In S. Freeman, Jr., L. S. Hagedorn, L. F. Goodchild, & D. A. Wright, (Eds.), *Advancing higher education as a field of study* (pp. 241-264). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

## BIOGRAPHIES

---



**Russell S. Thacker** is a doctoral candidate at the University of Idaho in Boise, Idaho. His research interests include leadership development of higher education leaders, adult learner development, and global higher education programs.



**Sydney Freeman, Jr.** is associate professor of higher education and qualitative research at the University of Idaho. Dr. Freeman's research investigates the challenges facing higher education administration programs. He is also the founder and editor-in-chief of *The Journal for the Study of Postsecondary and Tertiary Education*.



**Dan Campbell** is the Director of Assessment and Accreditation and Instructor of Education at the University of Idaho. Dr. Campbell's research examines Higher Education as a system focusing on data-driven decision making, administration, and assessment.