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Collaborative Leadership in the Institutions of Higher Education: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This study aims to review the literature concerning collaborative leadership in the context of institutions of higher education. The study covers empirical research from 2000 to 2021, providing insights into how collaborative leadership in this context is understood. Material for the study consists of 20 articles, which are analysed using qualitative content analysis. The analysis identifies three major categories highlighted in the literature as significant characteristics of collaborative leadership: namely, the participation of diverse people accelerates collaboration, learning transpires through collaboration, and empowerment leads to momentous change. This paper concludes with suggestions for future research topics.

Key Words: Collaborative leadership, content analysis, higher education institutions, literature review

Introduction

Collaboration is argued to be crucial for the success of Institutions of Higher Education (hereafter IHEs) (Hallinger and Heck, 2010; Middlehurst, 2012). IHEs are knowledge-intensive organizations and occupy a unique position in any society as forerunners in developing new knowledge (Hall and Tandon, 2017). IHEs are expected to deliver high-quality results that advance sustainable development (Altbach, 2013; Gaus et al., 2020). Several IHE-related studies (e.g., Burns and Mooney, 2018; Eagly and Chin, 2010; Jameson, 2013; Jones et al., 2012) highlight increasing demand for cooperation and knowledge sharing between different actors, without which IHEs cannot survive and prosper. IHE leadership has a key role in responding to this demand (Bryman, 2007). In recent years especially, the importance of collaborative leadership (hereafter CL) in IHEs has been stressed (e.g., Bryman, 2007; Burns and Mooney 2018; Leiber, 2018). Since CL is argued to have a crucial role in empowering people to collaborate, leading in turn to new knowledge production and high-quality results (Black, 2015; Bolden, Petrov and Gosling, 2009; Chrislip, 2002; Huxham and Vangen, 2000; Kezar and Eckel, 2002; Van Wart, 2013).

Although CL is an emerging approach in IHEs, unfortunately, we do not know enough about its significance in this context, and there is a gap in the extant literature. Researchers argue (e.g., Black, 2015; Pearce and Conger, 2003) that IHEs have been relatively slow in adopting CL, especially due to their traditional hierarchical relationships. Against this backdrop, the present study aims to increase understanding of the topic by conducting a literature review. To achieve this aim, the review explores the significant characteristics of leadership associated with CL in the IHE context. The literature analyzed and interpreted covers the period of 2000 to 2020. We believe that two decades is long enough to capture how the topic is understood in the IHEs context. Assuming that leadership is a contextually situated phenomenon (Ladkin, 2010; Uhl-Bien and Ospina, 2012), we contribute to current knowledge by

discussing what can be learnt from the extant research about the characteristics of CL in higher education. Moreover, we contribute by identifying gaps in previous research and suggesting future research directions.

Discussions concerning leadership approaches have a long history in scientific research (Yukl, 2010; Bryman et al., 2011; Grint, 2011). Few scholars, however, have accepted and agreed on the precise definition of the term 'leadership'. Despite the ambiguity of its meaning, a generally accepted idea is that leadership involves a process whereby intentional influence is exerted by an individual or group of individuals in guiding and advancing relationships and activities in order to achieve common organizational goals (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009). From this viewpoint, Reicher, Haslam, and Hopkins (2005) have criticised the centralized and hierarchical nature of leadership, such as the leader's command and control or the single personality perspective in work-life competition.

Methodology

A qualitative content analysis of the selected English peer-reviewed publications was conducted. It is a systematic reading and interpretation process that allowed us to reveal the research topic's contents by identifying categories in the publications (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). This method is useful, because it describes the topic in a relatively compact form and detects its key ideas (Moretti et al., 2011). Popular online databases such as EBSCO, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, SAGE, Emerald, Google Scholar were used to search for relevant articles. The following keywords were used: "collaborative + leadership", "collaborative + practices", "collaborative + process", "academic + organizations", "higher + education + institutions", "universities", "shared + leadership", "bottom-up + leadership". In total, 124 articles published in the English language, including peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and conference proceedings, were identified. The analysis process was divided into two phases. To begin with, as explained below, a systematic screening process consisting

of four stages was used, as suggested by Bennett et al. (2005).

Stage 1: Searching for credible journal articles.

In the first stage of the process, out of the 124 articles, we removed book chapters, dissertations, and conference proceedings and, consequently, focused on peer-reviewed journal articles. Unlike most conference proceedings, dissertations and book chapters, the journal articles fulfil scientific publication criteria and have gone through a rigorous blind review process. Therefore, we considered the journal articles to be appropriate and credible sources in this study. Additionally, because journal articles' citation rates tend to be higher than book chapters, dissertations and conference proceedings, the articles can be considered more influential in the field. This stage resulted in removing 19 articles, thus leaving 105 articles in our data set.

Stage 2: Removing the duplicate journal articles.

Using multiple online and digital libraries to search for the articles carries the risk of duplication, especially when using the Google Scholar database. The same applies to our data set of articles. To avoid duplication, we adopted and deployed the following process. Firstly, we read the title, abstract and conclusion section of the articles. Next, we summarized the articles in an excel sheet and classified the articles according to the title, purpose and scope, methodology and significant findings. As a result, 32 articles were identified as duplicates and therefore removed. Hence, we were left with 73 articles in our dataset.

Stage-3: Articles' scope mismatch.

During this stage, the aforementioned excel sheet was used to identify relevant articles concerning higher education organizations. This means that all articles concerning non-academic organizational contexts were removed from the database. All articles published in other educational contexts than higher education were removed from the database. This resulted in the removal of 42 articles. We were then left with 31 articles in our dataset.

Stage 4: Interchangeable terms.

At this final stage, we focused on collaboration in leadership in the remaining publications. We found that many articles used different terms than collaboration or collaborative to describe the viewpoint of cooperation in leadership. These terms were 'shared leadership' and 'distributed leadership'. However, since this study aimed to focus on the concept of CL specifically, we decided to only include studies that used the term collaborative or collaboration as the critical feature of leadership. The sample was hence purposeful and resulted in the exclusion of 11 articles from our database. Finally, we had 20 articles to be analyzed.

Next, the 20 articles were analyzed to explore their contents concerning the key characteristics of CL. During this analysis phase, we examined the keywords, phrases and sentences that are closely associated with collaboration or CL in the IHE context. Relevant to the scope and purpose of our review, we sorted keywords and sentences into definitions that describe the meaning of CL. From these definitions, we further identified three major content-based categories representing the key characteristics of CL in the IHE context. To ensure reliability, the categories were discussed and agreed upon by three independent researchers. These categories are labelled as follows: participation of diverse people accelerates collaboration, learning transpires through collaboration, and empowerment leads to momentous change.

Findings

In Table 1 (p. 51), an overview and a list of the analyzed articles are given.

Participation of diverse people accelerates collaboration

Reference	Title	Journal	Research methodology	Data and analysis method	Country of data-collection	The key definition of collaborative leadership
Gaus et al, 2020	Understanding the nature and practice of leadership in higher education: a phenomenological approach	International Journal of Leadership in Education	Qualitative study	Interviews, Interpretive phenomenological analysis	Indonesia	In CL, everyone is valued and their work performance appreciated. Various experts within and across the organization aim to learn from different people to achieve productive results. It is important to pay attention to gender in advancing collaboration in leadership.
Burns and Mooney, 2018	Transcollegial leadership: a new paradigm for leadership	International Journal of Educational Management	Conceptual study		---	CL transcends traditional boundaries between parties and develops collaborative processes. Diverse parties interact and take the initiative to lead together and create a dynamic learning environment.

Koeslag-Kreunen et al., 2018	Leadership for team learning: The case of university teacher teams	Higher Education	Qualitative case study	Open-ended interviews Directive content analysis method	Netherlands	CL means the process of communicating knowledge, opinion and creative thought. It empowers people with diverse backgrounds to undergo a collaborative learning process.
Youngs, 2017	A critical exploration of collaborative and distributed leadership in higher education: Developing an alternative ontology through leadership-as-practice	Journal. of Higher Education Policy and Management	Theoretical study		---	In CL processes, academic staff, executives and stakeholders develop networks and a cooperative learning atmosphere in order to achieve high-quality teaching and research.
Black, 2015	Qualities of effective leadership in higher education	Open Journal of Leadership	Theoretical paper		---	Collaboration discourages an individualistic approach to leadership. Diverse people in collaboration promote each other's competencies, advancing an organizational culture in which collaborative leaders understand themselves as learners.
Parrish, 2015	The relevance of emotional intelligence for leadership in a higher education context	Studies in Higher Education	Qualitative case study Longitudinal design	Semi-structured interviews Interpretive grounded theory analysis	Australia	Emotionally intelligent leadership promotes collaboration and teamwork. Collaboration between leaders and followers builds bonds based on inspiration in order to reach organizational goals.
Garrison and Vaughan, 2013	Institutional change and leadership associated with blended learning innovation: Two case studies	Internet and Higher Education	Mix-method case study approach	Survey, interviews and focus group discussion Cluster analysis based on Meta-analysis.	Canada	CL provides direction through open communication and specific action plans, which can enhance collaborative learning, aiming to improve the quality of teaching and learning experience.
Humphreys, 2013	Deploying collaborative leadership to reinvent higher education for the twenty-first century	Peer Review	Conceptual Paper		---	CL connects IHEs with business organizations and government during change. CL aims to advance multiple goals and actions in order to achieve significant results among students.
Jameson, 2013	e-Leadership in higher education: The fifth "age" of educational technology research	British Journal of Educational Technology	Theoretical paper		---	In CL, social learning, trust and innovation are possible. CL means that people break traditional divisions between leaders and others. Technology provides learning opportunities and advancement among leaders, staff, students and stakeholders acting in cooperation.
Parylo, 2013	Collaborative principal preparation programs: A systematic review and synthesis of qualitative research	International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation	Literature Review		---	CL means that people from universities collaborate with many public sector people. This process improves academic institutions' quality, equity and success.

Denis, Langley and Sergi, 2012	Leadership in the plural	Academy of Management Annals	Literature Review		---	CL refers to interaction process between and among people and adopts a relational and post-heroic leadership approach.
Jones et al, 2012	Distributed leadership: A collaborative framework for academics, executives and professionals in higher education	Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management	Qualitative action research Longitudinal design	Documentary data and group discussions A grounded theory approach in the analysis	Australia	In CL, less hierarchical and more collaborative approaches are important, acknowledging people's multiple competencies. Diverse people with different perspectives can provide a broad range of knowledge, ideas and learning in order to drive change in universities.
Lowe, 2011	Breaking the stained-glass ceiling: Women's collaborative leadership style as a model for theological education	J. of Research on Christian Education	Conceptual paper		---	CL focuses on changing an individual-centred leadership approach to a collective-centred leadership approach. Women are needed to empower collaborative learning and collective performance.
Bolden, Petrov and Gosling, 2009	Distributed leadership in higher education: Rhetoric and reality.	Educational Management Administration & Leadership	Qualitative study	In-depth interviews, observation and documentary data A narrative approach in the analysis	UK	CL is a social interactive influence process. Actors in the process build a collaborative environment based on mutual interest and understanding, sharing power together.
Bryman, 2007	Effective leadership in higher education	Studies in Higher Education	Literature review		---	CL promotes an atmosphere of learning in which diverse people foster collegiality, construct valuable feedback and provide considerable support and care for one another.
Raelin, 2006	Does action learning promote collaborative leadership?	Academy of Management Learning & Education	A qualitative action learning approach	Reflective dialogue data from meetings and observations Reflective dialogue data from meetings and observations	USA	CL emphasizes a collective approach in which peers operate in social interaction. CL aims to unlock diverse people's capacities, create meaningful knowledge for learning, and advance people's empowerment, in contrast to bureaucratic authority.
Kezar, 2005	Redesigning for collaboration within higher education institutions: An exploration into the developmental process	Research in Higher Education	Mixed-method case study	Survey, interviews, documentary data and observation Inductive and deductive thematic coding in the analysis	USA	CL is a socially constructed process in which people with diverse skills and interests develop professional learning communities, support intellectual resources, and promote collaborative culture in order to create knowledge.
Komives et al, 2005	Developing a leadership identity: A grounded theory	Journal of College Student Development	Qualitative grounded theory methodology	Structured interviews Constant comparative analysis.	USA	CL is a new leading, learning, and self-governing process. Social interaction is important in changing from a leader-centric approach to a collaborative leadership approach. In CL, people's social identity enables them to exhibit relational leadership, which involves inclusiveness, empowerment and ethics.

Martin et al., 2003	Variation in the experience of leadership of teaching in higher education	Studies in Higher Education	Qualitative study, Phenomeno-graphic approach Cross-sectional design	Interviews in a dialogical manner Phenomeno-graphic analysis	Australia	CL establishes a collaborative culture based on mutually agreed principles to ensure high-quality teaching and learning. CL is related to people's empowerment in advancing change.
Kezar and Eckel, 2002	The effect of institutional culture on change strategies in higher education: Universal principles or culturally responsive concepts	Journal of Higher Education	Qualitative, ethnographic case study Longitudinal design	Interviews, documents and participant observations. Lindquist's framework, Bergquist's (1992) four academic cultures and Tierney's (1991) individual institutional culture framework was used for data analysis.	USA	CL is a participatory, changing and learning process involving multiple people in different positions throughout campus.

Table 1. Summary of the articles.

This first category emphasizes the significance of increasing the possibilities for diverse people to participate in IHE leadership (Black, 2015; Gaus et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2012; Lowe, 2011). Diverse people in leadership means bringing different perspectives and greater depth and breadth in articulating values and solving problems in learning (Jameson, 2013; Kezar, 2005). Various kinds of diversity are discussed in the articles, such as organizational position, occupation, gender, and competency. Moreover, the participation of diverse stakeholders and the importance of diverse social identities are referred to in the articles.

One aspect of diversity highlighted in this literature is that people representing different levels, positions and occupations in an IHE need to have the opportunity to participate in leadership activities (Burns and Mooney, 2018). Burns and Mooney argue that when the boundaries based on hierarchical positions between leaders and led are transcended through collaboration, high-quality decisions can be made in a timely and meaningful way. They stress that people in different positions and occupations need to have the chance to interact and share their views. This kind of participation enhances equality and brings greater recognition of women's contributions to leadership, which also affects IHE members' job satisfaction positively (Lowe, 2011).

Another aspect of diversity that appears in the articles is gender. Gaus et al. (2020) and Lowe (2011) stress that more women are needed in different leadership roles in IHEs. According to Lowe (2011), traditionally, leadership in IHEs has been male-dominated, and it is necessary to break this tradition, as well as to challenge leadership approaches centred on single entities. Lowe, who focused on theological IHEs in her article, argues that a change that women bring to these institutions' leadership is that they can promote collaboration by creating networks, engaging in cooperative relationships, and maintaining positive relationships. She also points out that including more women is important because their presence signals to female students that can advance in leadership careers. A study by Gaus et al. (2020) also supports the importance of increasing women's role

in IHEs. They found that women's leadership traits, such as caring, non-assertiveness, emotionality, and non-competitiveness, are helpful in developing charisma in leadership. These features inspire people's intrinsic motivation and contribute to achieving the common good.

Black's (2015) study stresses the importance of people's diverse competencies. According to Black, this aspect is important because bringing actors with diverse skills and knowledge together collegially can help IHEs to face internationalization and market-driven competition. Kezar (2005), Burns and Mooney (2018) and Gaus et al. (2020) also emphasize the significance of diverse competencies in CL. They argue that it is essential for CL that people with diverse expertise and skills develop professional communities, since leadership is a socially constructed process. Knowledge is not merely constructed but co-constructed between people with unique perspectives and skills. Further support for this perspective is found in Denis, Langley and Sergi (2012), whose article concerns leadership as fluid and constructed in interaction. The authors argue that to be successful, CL within knowledge-based organisations hence requires integration of individuals with different skill sets.

The importance of diverse stakeholders' participation is also mentioned in the articles. In their studies, Raelin (2006) and Koeslag-Kreunen (2018) report that connecting the members of an IHE with its stakeholders in a meaningful way increases opportunities for constructive cooperation, which can in turn improve motivation, morality and expertise. Furthermore, Parylo's (2013) study emphasizes that it is useful for IHEs to undertake collaborative initiatives with diverse stakeholders such as government, district leaders, state leaders, professional and profits organizations, in order to improve performance and develop people's ability to view problems from a broad perspective. Moreover, Bolden, Petrov and Gosling (2009) and Humphreys (2013) emphasize that the common experiences of various stakeholders, such as students, local communities, academic and administrative staff, university council members, funding agencies, government policymakers, and media

representatives, have the potential to transcend the traditional bureaucratic nature of leadership in IHEs, taking it in a more collaborative direction. The benefits of collaboration between IHEs and stakeholders can include better team cohesion, pedagogical innovation, high-quality research, teaching and learning, and public recognition (Kezar and Eckel, 2002; Humphreys, 2013; Jameson, 2013).

Finally, Komives et al. (2005) studied diverse students' leadership development over time from a social identity viewpoint. This research focused on students who were considered exemplars of relational leadership and who represented various diversity dimensions such as gender, race stage of studies, religion and sexual orientation. Komives et al. claim that a change towards CL is based on a change in values. Change is needed from self-centred values to collective-centred and relationally oriented leadership values. The researchers stress that including diverse individuals in leadership improves the efficacy of collaboration, as their diverse social identities enable them to take a relational approach, gaining an in-depth and meaningful understanding of and interest in others' ideas and actions. The participation of people with diverse social identities supports the development of dignity and respect in leadership and promotes its ethical orientation.

Learning transpires through collaboration

In this second category, various studies emphasize learning as a central result of collaboration and therefore as a key characteristic of CL in IHEs. For example, Bryman (2007) explains that people who work in cooperation can develop a 'learning community', in contrast to those who follow a hierarchical command-and-control leadership approach. Collaborative learning is seen as a continuous reciprocal interactional process and is primarily associated with a joint intellectual approach (Lowe, 2011; Raelin, 2006). As discussed in Denis, Langley and Sergi (2012) and Lowe (2011), effective collaborative learning occurs when people engage in dialogue, share knowledge, and negotiate their understandings. People bring both their ideas and knowledge to collaborative processes, building new knowledge together and aiming to learn from mistakes (Black, 2015). Bolden, Petrov and Gosling (2009) hence explain that in order for IHEs to be creative and innovative, collaborative learning needs to be an essential characteristic of its leadership.

In the articles, collaborative learning is considered central to promoting team building and driving meaningful change in the context of IHEs (Denis, Langley and Sergi, 2012; Garrison and Vaughan, 2012). For example, the importance of fostering team-based professional communities is mentioned in Martin's (2003) study. According to Martin, collaborative learning between staff members and especially between teachers and students is a means of developing organizational cultures that are conducive to high-quality teaching and learning. Kezar (2005) states that collaborative learning is a fundamental need that brings staff, students and stakeholders together to work cross-functionally to achieve academic excellence.

Although the development of collaborative learning is mentioned in the articles, Garrison and Vaughan (2012) state that a learning perspective should be discussed more in the field of academic leadership. They believe that an individual has only limited knowledge and possibility to exercise leadership in IHEs, insufficient to advance the changes needed. However, people in these institutions are at risk of adopting an individualistic position- and leader-centric viewpoint instead of aiming to understand the organization as a common learning community.

Based on Parrish's (2015) study, which aimed to identify the importance of emotional intelligence for effective leadership at a faculty/department level, emotional intelligence is considered a significant feature in enabling collaborative learning. Parrish explains that emotional intelligence in leadership includes features such as self-awareness, empathy, honesty, confidence, and a sense of responsibility. These features are relevant in leadership that aims to establish and maintain a collaborative environment and to promote thought-provoking ideas and discussions. According to Parrish, especially the ability to show empathy, to inspire and guide others, and to manage oneself responsibly are the most applicable to academic leadership. Empathy facilitates leaders' collaboration with and learning from their teams, as well as the negotiation of realistic and appropriate team goals. Bryman's (2007) research also supports the significance of empathy for effective leadership in IHEs. Finally, Parrish (2015) criticizes the fact that people in leadership positions in IHEs are not usually offered leadership training and are expected to learn solely through their experiences. She argues that more training is necessary to develop leadership in IHEs.

Jameson (2013) and Kezar and Eckel (2002) draw attention to various technologies used in IHEs and argue that the technologies offer critical building blocks for shaping collaborative learning. According to these researchers, technologies which consider collegiality, quality accountability and innovation in research and teaching are needed. Furthermore, they argue that advanced digital technologies can connect IHEs worldwide, enabling collaborative learning and partnership. Considering the pivotal role played by emerging technologies, Jameson (2013) argues that various digital channels, including the internet, email, social media and so on play essential roles in facilitating the development of expertise and collaborative learning in leadership processes in IHEs.

With respect to learning, various articles (e.g., Komives et al., 2005; Raelin, 2006; Black, 2015) stress students' active role in learning processes. For example, Komives et al. (2005) explain that students' continual learning develops their leadership capabilities, which is necessary for future working life challenges. Raelin (2006) argues that students' self-learning and self-discovery increase their engagement and ability to tackle unfamiliar problems that is increasingly important in changing work life. Moreover, Black's (2015) study lends further support to the idea that learning among students and between students and staff supports students' involvement in and helps them to create future knowledge-based societies.

Various benefits of collaborative learning are mentioned in the articles. For example, Koeslag-Kreunen (2018) and Komives et al. (2005) found that learning in a team facilitates the team members' self-assessment skills. Raelin's (2006) study also provides support for the argument that collaborative learning is essential for people's ability to self-reflect concerning others. Improved self-reflection is argued to motivate team members to strive for high standards and transform an institution into a learning community (Garrison and Vaughan, 2012). Kezar and Eckel (2002) and Martin (2003) highlight that a collaborative culture combined with collaborative learning is crucial in the context of IHEs. In particular, as mentioned in Raelin's (2006) study, reflective collective conversation, with emphasis on engagement between an organization's members, students, teachers and stakeholders, is crucial to learning from peers and building sustainable partnerships.

Empowerment leads to momentous change

Category three highlights the positive change that individuals with empowering beliefs can make in overcoming the shortcomings of a traditional leadership approach in IHEs. The traditional leadership approach is associated with leader-centric authority, power, and hierarchy (Jones et al., 2012). Burns and Mooney (2018) point out that CL can enhance the freedom of all individuals in IHEs to influence and act. Various researchers (e.g., Black, 2015; Bolden, Petrov and Gosling, 2009; Denis, Langley and Sergi, 2012; Jones et al., 2012) state that a significant challenge faced by IHEs is that, instead of traditional leadership based on rigid power and authority, these institutions need increasingly to empower their members for better performance.

Empowerment refers to breaking down centralized, hierarchical boundaries as well as allowing and fostering more freedom and power for the IHE's members to influence its activities and relationships (Gaus et al., 2020). Empowerment is understood as a phenomenon in which power emanates from all the members of an organization and its stakeholders (e.g., Raelin, 2006; Burns and Mooney, 2018). It has the potential to capitalize on everyone's strengths and to advance teamwork rather than viewing people's work as directed by authoritative power. When people are empowered, they undergo a shift in their work processes and relationships with one another and with the traditional holders of power. For example, according to Denis, Langley and Sergi (2012), empowerment occurs when power relationships are diffused and power, authority, resources, sources of legitimacy and expertise are widely dispersed among various individuals. Lowe (2011) takes a gender perspective on this topic in her study. According to Lowe, women in leadership tend to view their authority and power from an other-oriented perspective. This relational model can be a suitable basis for empowerment. In their study, Denis, Langley and Sergi (2012) explain that sharing leadership in teams and spreading leadership across organizational boundaries are crucial elements that promote empowerment.

Various positive outcomes of empowerment on an individual level are presented in the articles. Kezar (2005) argues that empowerment reinforces people's belief in themselves and creates self-confidence, which is a necessary quality in collaborative initiatives. Empowering people creates a sense in delivering ideas and encourages self-leadership (Komives et al., 2005). Bolden, Petrov and Gosling (2009), as well as Garrison and Vaughan (2012), found that leadership that fosters empowerment improves motivation. Raelin (2006), for his part, emphasizes that empowered individuals are generally considered more energetic and confident in sharing their ideas and solutions. Moreover, Raelin states that empowered people are prepared to act, knowing what to do and how to do it. Hence, empowerment strengthens people's self-efficacy, which ultimately enables freedom of thought, autonomy and ability to cooperate with others. Raelin also proposes that employee empowerment helps leaders to delegate responsibilities and prepares an organization's members to face and manage unknown situations more successfully.

A body of the articles (Bryman, 2007; Burns and Mooney, 2018; Kezar and Eckel, 2002; Komives et al., 2005; Lowe, 2011) lend support to the idea that empowerment as a leadership feature is related to institutional excellence. For instance, Bryman (2007) says that to achieve success, IHE leaders need to give up their high level of control and build an environment that helps its members to recognize and appreciate each other's work as well as to value working together. Empowerment is also viewed in the articles from the perspective of students. Jameson (2013) and Martin (2003) argue that if students are empowered, they will independently break down the traditional barriers be-

tween students and teachers and can prioritize assignments for themselves. Humphreys (2013) contributes by recognizing the importance of students' role in spreading knowledge and supporting innovation in an IHE. Through empowerment, students have opportunities to direct their relationships with staff members and stakeholders, pursuing their aspirations and making appropriate choices for themselves.

Discussion and conclusion

This review revealed that the majority of research in this area is based on Anglo-Saxon and Australian contexts. This finding lends support to a general argument in leadership literature that research tends to rely on knowledge of a Western origin (Zhang et al., 2012). Such bias constrains the understanding and applicability of CL in other societal and socio-cultural contexts. Because IHEs do not operate in a vacuum, removed from their broader societal and cultural environments, we think that CL needs to be researched more in non-Western societies and emerging economies. It would be important to study especially how CL is understood and is applicable in societies where authoritarian leadership, in general, is widely accepted and used. Various methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative, are useful for achieving a versatile view of the topic.

It is widely known that women's opportunities in leadership are limited in many societies that are male dominated (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2021). Our results indicate, however, that for IHEs to be successful, the participation and empowerment of diverse people, such as different genders, is important. A question therefore arises as to how women's participation in leadership can be advanced in IHEs that operate in authoritarian societies. This topic merits clarification. Moreover, we suggest that not only gender but also other kinds of diversity should be in the focus of future studies. An intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1991) that combines various diversity dimensions (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, religion and so on) can offer a fruitful perspective on the topic, rather than focusing merely on one diversity dimension.

Our findings indicate that discussions around CL in IHEs tend to view it in a positive light. Potential problems related to CL were rarely mentioned in the articles. However, the participation of diverse people in leadership and learning processes may not always be easy and problems can occur. For example, people with different cultural backgrounds may have different values and learning tendencies. This can cause tension between people and prolong the collaborative learning process. Empowerment that allows people ownership and responsibility can lead to confusion or even chaos if people are not used to making decisions and using power. We suggest that problems and drawbacks concerning CL in IHEs also need to be researched more in the future.

This paper also has limitations. The sample size is only 20 articles, albeit all focused explicitly on CL in the IHE context. Future research could broaden the scope of the field and, for example, use different search words, such as shared and distributed leadership, to better understand collaboration in leadership. The articles in this review include indexed journals retrieved from popular online scholarly platforms and written in the English language. Future research could also broaden the scope of the study to include doctoral dissertations and publications in different languages. It is possible that studies on the subject may have been published in languages other than English. In our sample, the qualitative research approach dominates. Future research may also apply a quantitative approach, increas-

ing the sample size of participants and examining, for instance, the factors that lead to CL in IHEs. In this review, the majority of the studies adopted a single-country perspective. It would be worthwhile to conduct cross-cultural studies. For example, comparing the idea and use of CL in developed and developing countries could provide further insight. Finally, while conducting this review, the COVID-19 situation has been devastating the world economy and also IHEs. Considering this situation, future research could examine how CL is effectively managed in the pandemic situation when e-leadership and related cooperation is increasingly used. For example, Jameson (2013), while examining e-leadership in IHEs, explained that the use of digital technologies can play a significant role in providing opportunities for collaboration between leaders, staff and students. Yet,

various challenges in collaborative e-leadership are also likely to occur. Future studies should tackle this topic more.

The importance of exercising CL has increased in the field of higher education in recent years (e.g., Burns and Mooney, 2018; Leiber, 2018), although, as this review shows, room for further research in this area exists. We think that especially more empirical studies are needed. It is generally argued that a single entity or person is less likely to possess the many perspectives and competencies necessary in the current world to lead an academic organization successfully. To conclude, we argue that the move towards effective CL is an ongoing learning and empowerment process that develops across a period of time in cooperation with diverse people in and around IHEs.

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