# BEYOND BUREAUCRATIC AUTHORITY: EXPLORING ACADEMIC LEADERS' JOURNEYS THROUGH MAXWELL'S FIVE LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP IN PAKISTANI HIGHER EDUCATION

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores how academic leaders in Pakistani higher education institutions perceive and experience leadership through the lens of John C. Maxwell's Five Levels of Leadership: Position, Permission, Production, People Development, and Pinnacle Leadership. Guided by an interpretivist paradigm and employing a hermeneutic phenomenological design, the research engaged 14 purposively selected academic leaders through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis revealed five key themes: leadership as a title versus influence, trust and relational engagement, institutional barriers to progression, mentorship and leader development, and legacy and cultural relevance. The findings highlight a predominant reliance on positional authority (Level 1) and reveal significant structural, cultural, and political obstacles to progress toward higher levels of influence-based leadership. This study underscores the need for intentional leadership development, depoliticized appointments, mentorship systems, and culturally responsive training frameworks to foster transformational academic leadership in Pakistan. This study offers implications for policymakers, institutional leaders, and researchers seeking to elevate leadership practices in higher education through structured and sustainable frameworks.

**Keywords:** Maxwell's Five Levels: Academic Leadership, Higher Education, Leadership Development, Pakistan

## Introduction

In recent years, leadership in higher education has garnered substantial attention from researchers. In developing countries such as Pakistan, the stakes for knowledge generation, national development, and institutional effectiveness are extremely high. In Pakistan, universities face growing demands for transparency and research productivity. In the context of global competitiveness, the role of leadership becomes indispensable at the higher educational level. A great deal lies in the quality of institutional leadership, often embedded at the positional level rather than the relational influence. Within this framework, Maxwell's Five Levels of Leadership provides a highly applicable lens for assessing the leadership journey in higher education.

Maxwell's (2011) leadership is a developmental process characterized by five levels. These are *Position, Permission, Production, People Development, and Pinnacle*. These five levels represent a shift from power-based to influence-based leadership. Level 1 leadership depends solely on formal authority, whereas higher levels require vision, mentorship, trust, and legacy building. It is necessary to implement this leadership model in the context of Pakistan.

As Ghaffar et al. (2023) perceived in their study on college leadership levels based on Maxwell's framework, it was directly linked to faculty job embeddedness. The study uncovered that faculty under leaders performing at higher Maxwell levels were more

highly engaged. They were more committed and aligned with the institutional goals. This underscores the transformational potential of leadership models in the field of higher education.

Leadership in higher education in Pakistan is primarily bureaucratic. Many academic positions, such as vice-chancellors and deans, are filled through political appointments. They do not post seniority-based systems but rather leadership merit institutional performance (Ullah, 2005). At Level 1, leadership is viewed as a higher designation than responsibility for change. Research suggests that this structural inertia contributes to low staff morale, innovation resistance, and institutional failure.

The disparity between private and public institutions offers insights into leadership practices in Pakistan. Bashir and Khalil (2017) found that leadership styles differ significantly between the two domains. Private universities adopt democratic and transformational approaches. Public sector institutions often operate under rigid controls. They lack initiative in leadership development.

The leadership gap is also linked to limited investment in professional development that is necessary for quality education (Abbas et al., 2021). While some universities offer leadership workshops or management training, few have embedded developmental leadership frameworks such as Maxwell's into formal academic governance. Hafizullah and Wajid (2015) noted that educational leadership in Pakistan often lacks theoretical grounding, and that strategic capacity remains weak across many higher education institutions. Their review of health professions education pointed to systemic barriers such as a lack of faculty training, an underdeveloped leadership infrastructure, and resistance to pedagogical reforms. Transformative leadership is impactful when practiced intentionally. In institutions where leaders actively engage at Levels 3 and 4, there are visible increases in the organizational culture, student outcomes, and institutional performance.

This study investigates how top leaders in Pakistan perceive Maxwell's leadership levels in practice. It also aims to identify barriers to progression across the five leadership levels. This highlights the urgent need to shift from command-based leadership (Level 1) to connection-, competence-, and character-driven models (Levels 4 and 5). As Pakistan positions itself in the global knowledge economy, effective academic leadership will be essential not only for institutional advancement but also for societal transformation.

**Objectives of the Study**
1. To explore how academic leaders in Pakistani higher education institutions understand and experience Maxwell's Five Levels of Leadership.
2. To identify the perceived barriers and enablers that affect leadership progression through Maxwell's levels in Pakistan's higher education context.

**Research Questions**
1. How do academic leaders describe their leadership journeys within

Maxwell's Five Levels?

2. What leadership behaviors and practices do leaders associate with each level of Maxwell's model?
3. How do academic leaders perceive the relevance of Maxwell's leadership framework in their respective institutional contexts?
4. What factors do academic leaders identify as challenges to progressing through the five leadership levels?
5. What organizational or cultural factors support leadership development beyond the "Position" level?
6. How do institutional policies and practices impact leaders' ability to grow through Maxwell's leadership stages?

**Literature Review**

Leadership within higher education institutions (HEIs) is critical in determining institutional quality, innovation, and responsiveness to society's needs. Unlike corporate or governmental leadership, university leadership should balance academic freedom with accountability, manage diverse stakeholder groups, and create inclusive environments that foster intellectual growth (Bolden et al., 2008). In Pakistan, university leadership faces additional challenges such as political interference, underfunding, and outdated management structures, making the study of effective leadership frameworks even more essential (Ullah, 2005).

Early leadership theories, such as trait, behavioral, and contingency theories, emphasized the inherent qualities or situational adaptability of effective leaders (Northouse, 2025). However, these models often fall short of higher education's complex and relational dynamics. More contemporary approaches, such as transformational, servant, and distributed leadership, have emerged as being more relevant.

Transformational leadership, introduced by Burns (1978) and extended by Bass (1994), emphasizes the vision, inspiration, and development of followers. Research in academic settings has consistently linked transformational leadership to higher faculty satisfaction and institutional performance (Bryman, 2007). Similarly, servant leadership, in which the leader prioritizes the growth of others, has shown positive outcomes in academic institutions by fostering trust and collaboration (Greenleaf, 2013).

In Pakistan, these modern approaches are underutilized, with a dominant presence of transactional and positional leadership, particularly in public institutions. Bashir and Khalil (2017) found significant gaps in leadership effectiveness based on sector, gender, and international exposure of academic heads in Punjab's universities Maxwell's five levels of leadership-position, permission, production, people development, and pinnacle-provide a staged approach to leadership growth. Each level reflects a transition from authority-driven leadership to leadership based on influence, trust, and personal values (Maxwell, 2011). The levels are:

1. Position: Leadership by title, limited to formal authority.
2. Permission: Based on relationships and trust.

3. Production: Achieving results and performance outcomes.
4. People Development: Mentoring and developing others.
5. Pinnacle: Leading through Legacy and Influence.

Maxwell's model has been applied in the corporate, educational, and non-profit sectors because of its adaptability and emphasis on intentional growth (Maxwell, 2011). However, peer-reviewed academic literature on its direct application in higher education, especially in developing countries is limited, suggesting a research gap that this study aims to fill. Maxwell's leadership principles have been increasingly adopted in academic and non-academic settings owing to their clarity, adaptability, and emphasis on personal growth. Educational institutions have used this model to structure leadership development programs, assess performance, and cultivate a leadership culture.

Globally, higher-education leadership has shifted from purely administrative roles to strategic and developmental leadership. In advanced education systems such as those in the UK, USA, Canada, and Australia, academic leaders are expected to be visionaries, relationship builders and organizational change agents (Middlehurst, 2008). This transition aligns closely with Maxwell's framework, particularly the shift from position-based leadership to People Development and Pinnacle leadership, emphasizing influence over authority.

Transformational leadership, a globally dominant model, significantly overlaps with Maxwell's higher levels. For example, Bass and Avolio's model of transformational leadership stresses individual consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation parallel to Maxwell's Levels 3 (Production), 4 (People Development), and 5 (Pinnacle) (Bass & Avolio, 1994). In many leading institutions worldwide, effective leaders empower others, create leadership pipelines, and leave legacies through mentorship and capacity building.

In North America, several universities, including Christian colleges and liberal arts institutions, have adopted the Five Levels Framework to train deans, department chairs, and student affairs leaders. These programs have reported increased trust, collaboration, and institutional productivity (Maxwell, 2011). In corporate and NGO settings, the model has proven helpful for leadership coaching and HR practices, especially in succession planning and mentoring programs.

Countries such as South Africa, India, and Malaysia have begun to localize leadership models, such as Maxwell's, within higher education by integrating them with cultural and institutional realities. In South Africa, for instance, leadership development programs focus on moving vice-chancellors from command-control models (Level 1) to trust- and influence-based models (Levels 3–5), especially in historically under-resourced universities (Msila, 2014). Pakistani higher education has grown substantially over the past two decades, with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) playing a key

role in expanding its institutional capacity. However, challenges remain in terms of governance, faculty development, and quality assurance (Anwar, 2007). Many universities operate under centralized decision-making frameworks, where leadership appointments are based on seniority or political alignment rather than merit or leadership potential (Ullah, 2005).

The development of effective academic leadership in Pakistan remains a significant challenge that is needed for improvement of teaching learning process (Arif et al., 2023). Despite the growing awareness of the need for transformative leadership, most institutions lack formal structures to train and support leaders. Leadership development is often informal, reactive, or limited to administrative tasks, rather than being strategic or people oriented. This trend has resulted in stagnation at Level 1 (Position) leadership in Maxwell's model, where authority is title-driven rather than trust- or performance-based

Leadership studies in Pakistan often highlight the mismatch between Western leadership models and local institutional realities. Hafizullah and Wajid (2015) emphasized that leadership in health professions education remains underdeveloped, mainly due to a lack of training, unclear roles, and the absence of accountability mechanisms. Leadership practices like decision making, monitoring, motivation shape directions and autonomy (Jamil et al., 2024). Gaffar et al. (2023) used Maxwell's leadership levels to assess the impact of principal leadership on job embeddedness in Punjab colleges. Their qualitative findings show that when leaders operate at higher levels, especially in the people development faculty, they display more substantial commitment and institutional loyalty (Ghaffar et al., 2023). Green leadership practices were explored in a recent study (Urooj et al., 2024).

Hafizullah and Wajid (2015), in their study on health professions education, noted that many faculty members are elevated to leadership roles without prior leadership training, leading to inefficiencies and institutional inertia. Similar findings have been reported across public universities, where appointment criteria emphasize seniority and academic qualifications but not leadership capacity.

Bashir and Khalil (2017) highlight that HoDs in private universities often display more participatory and democratic leadership styles than their public counterparts, resulting in improved faculty satisfaction and departmental performance. Ghaffar et al. (2023) also found that principals who operated at higher Maxwell levels fostered job embeddedness among faculty, indicating that meaningful leadership growth directly influences organizational loyalty and retention. Job satisfaction results in self-esteem enhancement in an organization (Anwer et al., 2015).

Locally, efforts are being made through HEC training programs and faculty development centers; however, these remain under-resourced and occasionally implemented. Hafizullah and Wajid

(2015) reported the launch of master's in health professions education (MHPE) programs, which provide foundational leadership skills but are still limited to a few institutions in Pakistan.

Several systemic and institutional constraints prevent the emergence of Maxwell's higher-level leadership in Pakistan's HEIs.

- University administrators have no national leadership development frameworks. Workshops and conferences are typically short-term and rarely address Maxwell's relational or mentorship-based levels of leadership.
- Many leadership roles are assigned through political patronage rather than performance, hindering progression beyond the position level Cultural hierarchy: Traditional South Asian values emphasize obedience and respect for seniority, often discouraging open dialogue, shared leadership, or innovation—core components of Levels 2–4 of Maxwell's model.
- Institutions do not typically develop future leaders or provide mentoring structures aligned with the People Development level (Level 4).

These constraints collectively create environments where even competent leaders struggle to develop the influence, trust, and legacy orientation required by Maxwell's higher leadership levels.

Despite these challenges, there are pockets of progress. Private institutions, such as LUMS and Aga Khan University, have begun to invest in leadership development, mainly through international partnerships, performance appraisals, and faculty mentoring systems. These institutions have been more open to adopting transformational and servant leadership practices, which align with Maxwell's Permission, Production, and People Development levels.

A scalable national framework is still lacking; therefore, leadership training rarely emphasizes progression beyond technical or operational skills. Without clear developmental pathways, most leaders remain stuck between Level 1 and Level 2 in Maxwell's framework.

Although empirical research on its academic applications is still growing, Maxwell's model remains a widely cited and respected developmental tool in educational leadership literature (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2009).

These examples are highly relevant to Pakistan. Institutional constraints, political interference, lack of accountability, and hierarchical cultures mirror those found in other Global South contexts. Therefore, the successful adaptation of Maxwell's framework in peer countries demonstrates its potential as a reform and development tool for academic leadership in Pakistan.

Despite its conceptual clarity, the Maxwell model is under-researched in empirical academic literature, particularly in formal higher education studies. Most research cites the model in training contexts or popular leadership books rather than peer-reviewed analyses. Few rigorous qualitative or mixed-methods studies have tested its applicability in diverse higher education settings.

It creates an important research gap for Pakistan. While some localized studies, such as Ghaffar et al. (2023), have effectively applied Maxwell's framework, the model has yet to be systematically explored across a broad spectrum of higher education institutions, roles, and cultural settings (Ghaffar et al., 2023).

This dynamic is particularly pronounced in Pakistani universities. Academic leaders frequently inherit roles through seniority-based promotions or politically motivated appointments rather than through leadership development pipelines (Ullah, 2005). As a result, individuals at the helm often lack the skills or institutional mandate to engage in collaborative, relational, or legacy-driven leadership, leaving them stagnant at the Position level of Maxwell's model.

Cultural attitudes toward gender also impact leadership progression. Although women have increasingly assumed academic leadership roles in Pakistan, their pathways to higher-level leadership often encounter resistance based on societal norms. Female leaders may be held to different standards or viewed as less authoritative, which directly conflicts with the respect-based model of Maxwell's Pinnacle Leadership.

Studies suggest that when female leaders are supported institutionally, they often display transformational and people-centric leadership closely aligned with Maxwell's Levels 4 and 5. However, these leadership styles are often undervalued in highly masculinized organizational cultures.

Maxwell's leadership progression inherently assumes a willingness to change personally and institutionally. In Pakistani academia, change is frequently viewed with suspicion, particularly when it threatens traditional power dynamics. Institutional resistance to innovation, whether in pedagogy, governance, or faculty evaluation, limits the ability of leaders to operate beyond the production level.

## Research Methodology

This study was conducted within an interpretivist research paradigm. Interpretivism emphasizes understanding human experiences from the perspective of individuals who live them, and reality is socially constructed (Jamil & Muhammad, 2019). This research explored how leaders understand and experience their success through Maxwell's Five Levels of Leadership in the context of higher education institutions in Pakistan.

A qualitative research design was employed, with a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Hermeneutic phenomenology explores the lived experiences of people to uncover the meanings they attribute to specific phenomena (Van Manen, 1990). Fourteen participants were selected using purposive sampling (Saleem et al., 2023). It was ensured that each participant had relevant experience as an academic leader, such as a head of department, dean, or director, within Pakistani universities. The selection was based on the participants' direct engagement with

leadership responsibilities.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The participants were allowed to openly discuss their style and position in relation to Maxwell's leadership model. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The six-phase approach by Braun and Clarke (2006), called thematic analysis, was used. These phases included:

1. Familiarization with data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. The final report was produced.

This systematic process ensured the accuracy and validity of the themes grounded in the data and that they were analytically coherent. Five overarching themes emerged from the analysis.

1. Leadership as a Title vs. Influence,
2. Trust and Relational Engagement,
3. Institutional Barriers to Progression,
4. Mentorship and Leader Development,
5. Legacy and Cultural Relevance.

These themes reproduced the participants' interpretations of Maxwell's levels. It illustrates how leadership is enacted, constrained, and developed within the higher education context in Pakistan. Throughout the process, reflexivity and memo writing were maintained. The purpose was to ensure that the interpretations remained embedded in the participants' experiences rather than in the researchers' statements (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Data Analysis**

The thematic analysis of the interviews revealed five interconnected themes that represent the participants' lived experiences of leadership within Pakistani higher education, aligned with John C. Maxwell's Five Levels of Leadership. Each theme is supported by rich first-person quotations illuminating the core meanings and tensions experienced by academic leaders.

**Theme 1: Leadership as a Title vs. Influence**

Participants highlighted that while leadership positions offer authority, actual influence emerges only when trust and credibility are earned through consistent action and ethical behavior. The following are some quotations from the participants.

*"When I got the position, I thought leadership was about being in control. However, I quickly realized that no one listens to you just because you have a title. I had to work twice as hard to prove that I could lead by example. Influence does not come with the office; it comes with action. That was a humbling lesson." — Participant A*

*"At first, I believed people would follow me just because I was appointed, she said. However, they watched me closely—how I treated others and how I handled stress. They respected me only when I started to engage with them honestly. Influence came from*

*consistency, not the chair I sat on. That changed my view of leadership completely."* — Participant F

*"The title gave me access, but not acceptance. I had to show fairness in my decisions and stand by my team when it mattered. Gradually, they began to trust me. I learned that real leadership is not imposed; it is invited. You earn the right to lead every day."* — Participant C

## Theme 2: Trust and Relational Engagement

Leadership progressed when leaders moved beyond transactional roles and fostered personal, trust-based relationships that built emotional commitment among the faculty and staff. The participants described their perspective in the following words.

*"They will not support you just because you are the boss. I started spending time getting to know them—asking about their work, concerns, and even their families. That is when things changed. They began to open up and collaborate more. Trust was the game-changer."* — Participant D

*"We talk a lot about policies, but people follow leaders they trust. If you are not approachable, they will not come to you in a crisis. I have made it a habit to walk around and talk informally with my colleagues. That was when I saw a real difference in their response to my leadership. Connection built commitment."* — Participant B

*"Trust does not develop in meetings; it develops in moments—small daily interactions. I stopped issuing instructions via email and started speaking to people directly. That helped them see me not only as an authority figure but also as someone who valued their input. From there, collaboration grew further. They followed because they wanted to, not because they had to."* — Participant H

## *Theme 3: Institutional Barriers to Progression*

Participants reported systemic challenges such as politicized appointments, rigid hierarchies, and lack of structured development, all of which hinder leadership progression beyond the positional authority. The following are some narrations from the participants.

*"Unfortunately, leadership here is more about connections than competence. You can have the vision and drive, but if you are not aligned politically, you are sidelined. This discourages many capable people from stepping forward. The system does not support leadership growth. It rewards compliance, not creativity."* — Participant K

*"I have been in this role for six years and have never received any formal training. We are expected to lead without being taught how to lead. Therefore, many stay stuck at Level 1—they have the title but not the tools. This is a structural failure. We need mentorship and leadership development embedded into our system."* — Participant E

*"I wanted to promote a junior colleague who showed real leadership potential, but I was told to prioritize someone senior. It felt wrong, but I had no choice in the matter. The institutional culture here values seniority over merit. This is a barrier that cannot be ignored. It prevents the emergence of authentic leaders."* — Participant N

**Theme 4: Mentorship and Leader Development**

This theme captured how leaders, especially those operating at higher Maxwell levels, viewed mentoring others as a key part of their leadership identity and impact. The following are some descriptions from the participants.

*"When I was new to leadership, no one guided me. I had to learn everything through trial and error. Therefore, I now make it a point to mentor young faculty members. I want to give them what I did not have: a supportive guide. Mentoring gives deeper meaning to my role." — Participant J*

*"Seeing someone you mentored succeed is a different kind of joy. I assisted one of my junior lecturers in leading a major project last year. He has done a great job, and he is now mentoring others. This ripple effect is powerful. It makes me feel like I'm leaving a mark beyond my own achievements." — Participant G*

*"I regularly involve my team in decision-making and project leadership. This builds their confidence and prepares them for future roles. When they grow, the institution grows as well. That is the legacy I want to leave. We need more leadership that creates leaders." — Participant M*

**Theme 5: Legacy and Cultural Relevance**

Participants reflected on their long-term impact and desire to be remembered for their values and service, not just their tenure or administrative achievements. Some quotations are narrated as under from the participants.

*"I do not want to be remembered for how many publications I had or how long I stayed in office. I want to be remembered for how I treat people. If I helped someone grow, that is my legacy. Leadership is about people, not paperwork. That's what lasts." — Participant I*

*"The real reward is not the title; it is what people say about you after you leave. Did you empower them? Did you stand by them during difficult times? If yes, then you have truly led. That's what I want to achieve before I retire." — Participant L*

*"Culturally, we respect hierarchy too much and ignore character. However, I believe that people remember integrity more than authority. I try to model this for my students and staff. I may not change the entire system, but I can set a standard in my space. That's my way of leading." — Participant M*

**Discussion**

The findings of this study provide critical insights into how academic leaders in Pakistani higher education institutions experience and interpret their leadership journey through the lens of John C. Maxwell's Five Levels of Leadership. The themes generated through hermeneutic phenomenological analysis were as follows:

1. *"Leadership as a Title vs. Influence,"*
2. *"Trust and Relational Engagement,"*
3. *"Institutional Barriers to Progression,"*
4. *"Mentorship and Leader Development,"*
5. *"Legacy and Cultural Relevance"*

These themes not only affirm the theoretical structure of Maxwell's leadership model but also highlight the specific contextual realities that shape leadership behavior in Pakistan. The 1st theme, titled "Leadership as a Title vs. Influence," highlights that holding a leadership position does not ensure respect or influence. This echoes Maxwell's view that 1st level positional leadership is only the beginning of this journey. Khwaja et al. (2022) pointed out that many educational leaders in Pakistan are chosen for their academic seniority. Their leadership skills, leading to "*accidental leadership*," are learned through experience and formal training.

The 2nd theme, titled "Trust and Relational Engagement," is affiliated with Maxwell's Level 2 leadership. This emphasizes the importance of leaders building relationships using empathy and active listening. The participants affirmed that such traits increased the faculty's motivation. This confirms the findings of Yasin et al. (2020). He emphasized emotional intelligence and ethical leadership in the Pakistani academia. Where a crisis persists due to rigid, command-based leadership styles. This theme stresses that building trust and strong relationships is key to Maxwell's Level 2 leadership. This boosts the motivation of the staff.

The impact of mentoring also supports Bhatti and Ali's (2020) results, which investigated women's leadership experiences. They identified mentorship as a major enabler of navigating leadership and its challenges in higher education institutions. Finally, the theme "*Legacy and Cultural Relevance*" resembles leadership Level 5. The 5th level is where leadership is based on legacy, values, and long-term impact. Participants wanted to be remembered not for their authority or achievements but for how they influenced people and upheld institutional values. This mirrors Maxwell's belief that the highest form of leadership is one grounded in moral character. Ali and Rasheed (2021) similarly noted that effective women leaders in Pakistan saw legacy-building, service, and personal values as integral to their leadership identity.

The study demonstrates that Maxwell's Five Levels of Leadership can serve as a development framework and diagnostic tool for Pakistani higher education. Most leaders start at the position level and progress despite limited institutional support, reflecting a lack of structured leadership development. Those who reach higher levels share traits such as relational skills, mentoring, and integrity. Cultural and gender barriers, particularly those affecting women, shape leadership and allow for reinterpretation. The study advocates for intentional, values-based leadership development and calls for systemic reforms such as depoliticized appointments, leadership training, and mentorship programs. Without such reforms, many leaders will remain trapped at Level 1, unable to fully realize their transformative potential in the upper levels of Maxwell's leadership ladder.

**Recommendation**

1. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) and universities should

design formal training programs based on developmental models, such as Maxwell's Five Levels, to equip academic leaders with relational, strategic, and ethical leadership skills.

2. Leadership roles such as vice-chancellors and deans should be filled based on merit, vision, and leadership capability rather than political affiliations or seniority to avoid stagnation at the positional leadership level.

3. Universities should create structured mentorship pathways to allow experienced leaders to train, support, and guide junior faculty, aligning with Maxwell's Level 4: People Development.

4. Leadership training should be adapted to local cultural and institutional realities in Pakistan, including religious, hierarchical, and gender dynamics, while still promoting relational and values-based leadership.

5. Training modules should include emotional intelligence components to improve leaders' relational and reflective capacities.

6. Leaders should be encouraged to engage in self-reflection, feedback loops, and participatory decision-making to move beyond command-based management toward influence-based leadership.

7. Leadership effectiveness should be linked to quality assurance benchmarks such as institutional performance, staff retention, and innovation outcomes.

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