

Instructions for authors, subscriptions and further details:

<http://ijelm.hipatiapress.com>

## **Women & Leadership in Higher Education**

Carmen Carrillo<sup>1</sup>

1) Universitat Internacional de Catalunya. Spain

Date of publication: January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Edition period: January 2015-July 2015

---

**To cite this article:** Carrillo, C. (2015). Women & Leadership in Higher Education [Review of the Book Women & Leadership in Higher Education]. *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management*, 3(1), 104-107. doi: 10.4471/ijelm.2015.06

**To link this article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.4471/ijelm.2015.06>

---

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

The terms and conditions of use are related to the Open Journal System and to [Creative Commons Attribution License](#) (CC-BY).

## Review

Longman, K.A. & Madsen, S.R. (Eds.) (2014). *Women & Leadership in Higher Education*. Charlotte, North Carolina: Information Age Publishing, Inc.

No one doubts that bringing more women into leadership can become critical for the progress of society. However, the number of women in leadership positions in institutions and organizations across all sectors is still limited. While many reasons have been provided in the scientific literature to explain this situation, the disconnection between female values and the male culture that still shape senior leadership positions in some companies have been often pointed out as one of the most determining factors.

Aware of the need of contributing to the advance of women in senior-level leadership roles, the International Leadership Association has launched the new book series “Women and Leadership: Research, Theory and Practice”, which seeks to address challenges faced by female leaders in a variety of professional contexts and to provide a comprehensive perspective of leadership. The first volume, entitled “Women & Leadership in Higher Education” and co-edited by Professor Karen A. Longman (Azusa Pacific University) and Professor Susan R. Madsen (Utah Valley University), pays specific attention to the status of women in leadership in the higher education sector in North America. This theme is approached from a perspective that draws together research, theory and practice. The emphasis on leadership in the field of higher education in this volume is of vital importance, as stated by

Professor Warren Bennis (University Professor and Distinguished Professor of Business Administration at the University of Southern California) in the Forward: “Those involved in higher education, and particularly those who lead institutions of higher education, shape the future in ways that directly influence the vitality and well-being of the United States and our world” (p. viii).

The book “Women & Leadership in Higher Education” is divided into four sections, each of which consists of several chapters. The opening section contains three chapters that define the status quo of women leadership across different sectors in the United States, with particular attention paid to higher education. The first chapter provides qualitative and quantitative data from the “Benchmarking Women’s Leadership in the United States 2013” report (Colorado Women’s College, 2013) in order to examine and facilitate the understanding of where women are in leadership roles across various sectors including higher education. Chapter two analyses several aspects related to the underrepresentation of women at the top levels of higher education leadership and offers individual and institutional strategies to improve this status. The third chapter draws upon the findings of two studies chaired by the author at both Princeton University and Duke University to provide insights into the ambitions of female undergraduate students and their preferences regarding areas of involvement in leadership positions. Interestingly, the participating female students showed a preference for leadership positions in which they could be committed to a cause they care about, even if this meant leading “behind the scenes”.

In response to concerns arising from the underrepresentation of women in higher education leadership, section two consists of three chapters which present a general overview of the approaches undertaken in three of the best-known women’s leadership development programmes in the United States. These chapters provide useful insights for both higher education institutions willing to implement this kind of training and for those women considering a move into senior leadership roles. The first chapter presents an overview of the work carried out by the American Council on Education (ACE) over the last four decades to promote the incorporation of women in leadership positions in colleges and universities. It also describes the “Moving the Needle” initiative, which seeks to raise awareness of the importance of gender parity in higher education and to present practices through which parity can be achieved. Chapter two outlines a series of best practices carried out by

Higher Education Resource Services over 40 years of experience in women's leadership training. This chapter also provides a research-based approach to curricular issues that can guide women on their journey to senior-level leadership. The third and last chapter describes the approach to leadership development adopted by the Women's Leadership Academy at the University of San Diego programming in order to raise leadership capacity among women. The author defines the four key principles on which these programs are founded: the clear distinction between leadership and authority, the acknowledgment of a pervasive organizational gender bias, the integration of both masculine and feminine leadership practice and the creation of a curriculum based on group dynamics.

In the four chapters included in the third section, experiences and contributions of women who have held leadership positions in colleges and universities are presented. In the first chapter, some areas women have contributed to leadership conceptualization and practice such as participatory decision-making, collaboration, inclusiveness or ethical orientation, among others, are outlined. The author also explains how, in a global economy characterised by competitive practices, women need to adopt a hybrid approach to leadership which blends strategies that have often been associated to both female's and male's forms of leadership. Chapter two draws upon data from a research that aimed to explore the personal and professional challenges that 26 women went through during their careers in senior leadership positions in the higher education context. Three factors that contributed to overcome these challenges, associated to reframing, resilience and self-efficacy, are described. The third chapter presents the main findings from a phenomenological research carried out with 10 women leaders holding senior positions in higher education. It also discusses how the interconnection among authenticity, gender and leadership can give useful insights to achieve a more comprehensive approach to leadership. The final chapter provides data from a study that sought to examine the gender's impact on the ability of eight female presidents of doctoral-granting universities to perform their jobs. Most presidents were aware that gender could at times make their job more difficult; however, they pointed out that they did not allow gender stereotypes to deter them.

In the final section five female presidents of higher education institutions provide lessons from their own experiences at the top of their field. The first chapter discusses three themes considered essential for a successful

presidency: the quest for legitimacy, managed authenticity and emotional intelligence. The author also argues that the ability to overcome the challenges of the presidency has more to do with style and personality than with competence. In chapter two some of the challenges that public research universities present for the work of female presidents in colleges or universities are described. These are related to major research achievements, land-grant roles, big-time sports, and academic medicine. The third chapter offers advices for those female leaders willing to become presidents of higher education institutions. The author also addresses several issues in relation to the skills and experiences needed to serve as a successful president. The first American woman of Mexican origin appointed president of an American higher education institution provides a brief biographical account of her personal and professional career in chapter four. She importantly highlights the power of college and university education to bring about change among people. The final chapter of the book describes the multiple transitions undertook by the author throughout her professional journey in higher education leadership and explains how recognizing her own grounding contributed to keep her excited in her successive positions.

The different perspectives around women leadership issues provided in this book are a true lesson on how a female approach to leadership in higher education can contribute to expand our understanding of leadership and how the academy, as well as other organizations and institutions across all sectors, can benefit from advancing more women into senior leadership positions. Although it is very focused on the North American context, the experiences and strategies contained in this volume can encourage and support those women willing to undertake leadership positions in higher education institutions worldwide.

Carmen Carrillo  
Universitat Internacional de Catalunya  
[ccarrillo@uic.cat](mailto:ccarrillo@uic.cat)