

Southern Perspectives on Research Leadership: Towards an Evaluation Framework

Final Technical Report

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While leadership development is a topic of great recent interest, there is a lack of clarity on how conceptions of leaders might differ across regions, and the perspective of Southern leaders is noticeably absent. This is of particular concern to development organizations striving that seek to integrate the realities of Southern leaders into their programming to ensure the relevance of their interventions and that programs do not result in discriminatory outcomes. Moreover, leadership qualities may also differ in the realm of research for development (R4D) as compared to other areas of business, political, or community leadership. This research uses a multiple case study approach to improve understanding of concepts of research leadership as articulated by emerging leaders in the Global South. It explores how leadership is conceptualized and evaluated by both Southern leaders and leadership development programs in the R4D context, and what implications this could have for evaluation frameworks.

Contents

Introduction	2
Research Objectives	2
Research Design & Methodology.....	3
Literature Review	4
Theories	4
Overview	4
Essentialist Theories.....	5
Relational Theories	5
Integrative Theories	6
Leadership and Culture	8
Leadership, Gender, and Equity.....	10
Leadership Building.....	11
Leadership Evaluation.....	12
Program Perspectives & Findings	13
Understandings of Leadership	14
Program Conceptualizations of Leadership	14

Participants' Definitions of Leadership	16
Leadership in R4D	17
Gender, Equity, and Leadership.....	18
Southern Perspectives	21
Definitions of Success and Evaluation Indicators	22
Evaluation	23
Conclusions: Implications for Evaluation Frameworks	25
Bibliography	27
Acknowledgements.....	29

Introduction

Leadership and leader development is currently a topic of great interest across a wide range of sectors. Leadership development programs and approaches are being used across a wide range of organizations and contexts. Yet leadership, and what good leadership means, is a contested notion (Barker; Day et al.; King and Nesbit; Kramer and Tao; Petrie; Popper and Lipshitz; Turnbull James). There is a lack of clarity on how conceptions of leaders might differ across regions, and the perspective of Southern leaders is noticeably absent (Bolden and Kirk; Iwowo; Scandura and Dorfman). This latter point is of particular concern to equity-oriented development organizations striving to understand and integrate the priorities, values, and realities of Southern leaders to ensure the relevance of their interventions about leaders, and ensure that programs do not result in entrenchment of status quo or in discriminatory outcomes. Moreover, leadership qualities or requirements may also differ in the realm of research for development, another area in which the literature is inconclusive (Airhihenbuwa et al.; Jones, Bailey, and Lyytikainen; Wellcome Trust). It is also vital to have a definition of leadership which is congruent with what the “target” leaders value. When intended results are not articulated well, organizations run the risk of implementing programs that are not relevant. If evaluation frameworks are then based on these results, they do not measure what is valued, and can instead push programming in the wrong direction or align incentives incorrectly. A major challenge for evaluation is therefore to ensure we’re assessing the right results, and the right things about those results. This research addresses this gap by exploring conceptualizations about leadership, the results of leadership development programs, and evaluation frameworks connected to those results, particularly in the R4D context.

Research Objectives

This research explored a range of conceptualizations about leadership, the results of leadership development programs, and evaluation frameworks connected to those results, particularly in the R4D context. The research thus sought to answer the following objectives and questions:

Objective 1: To explore research leadership for emerging leaders in the Global South

- What does the literature say about building leaders in the Global South? What conflicting perspectives emerge about leaders and leadership?

- Does the literature take into account factors such as gender, ethnicity, and geography when developing conceptions of leadership, particularly in R4D?
- How do leadership development programs, specifically in areas relevant to research for development, define their results?
- What strategies (if any) are being used to build leaders or leadership in a way that takes into account gender and equity?
- How do emerging research leaders in the Global South understand leadership? Is research leadership conceptualized differently by groups who have traditionally been excluded (e.g. women and marginalized groups)?
- What are (or are there) key values/dimensions of leadership in a Southern context?

Objective 2: To move toward an evaluation framework for building emerging research leaders.

- How is leadership in R4D currently being evaluated by development organizations/funders?
- Are there broadly shared understandings of leadership in R4D which could be used to create an evaluation framework? Is it possible to have a broad enough results framework that it could include local context, and how broad would it have to be?
- What frameworks, measures, or indicators might be used by IDRC to assess the leadership dimension of research, from proposal, to implementation, to outcomes in a way that ensures Southern perspectives are prioritized?

Research Design & Methodology

Informed by a literature review, the study uses a non-essentialist conceptual approach to leaders and leadership which means rejecting the idea that leaders must, or can, be defined by a uniform set of qualities or abilities. Instead, it uses the lens of transformative leadership to explore how the relational, ethical, and power dynamics elements of leadership are addressed in how leadership is discussed, and how results are defined (Bolden and Kirk; Caldwell et al.; Shields). This framework of analysis is relevant as it allows for deeper examination of the contextual factors influencing perceptions of leadership, ensures that marginalized perspectives are heard, and gives room for multiple definitions of leadership to exist and be evaluated. This project takes an inductive approach to research, by using data collected to draw out essential dimensions of research leadership in the Global South that could be used to inform the creation of an evaluation framework.

This study examined four leadership development programs for participants in the Global South to explore commonalities and differences in conceptualizations of leadership and its evaluation. Three programs were fellowship programs for emerging research leaders in different development sectors, and one was for development practitioners and community leaders. 12 program staff, as well as external evaluators and one tertiary informant took part in face-to-face semi-structured interviews. I also received program documentation such as curriculum materials and results frameworks which were included in the analysis. 64 participants from two of the case programs also completed an online or in person survey. This survey included both qualitative and quantitative questions designed to gather data on participants' conceptualizations of leadership in R4D, the dimensions they considered to be most critical to being a leader, and their perspective on gender and equity concerns.

Literature Review

I first conducted a literature review to see how program results frameworks and participant perspectives align (or not) with formal theory on leaders and leadership. Program results frameworks are developed for program design, management, learning, reporting and evaluation. They may or may not be based on scholarly literature. As such, a literature review may help surface implicit or explicit reference to different theories in results frameworks. This was used to explore how results frameworks might be strengthened by theory. Moreover, participant perspectives may reinforce, deepen or question the literature. Given my interest in leader(ship) development in research for development, I approached the literature with particular interests: how does the literature account for significant cross-cultural differences in definitions and expectations of leaders and leadership? How does the literature deal with gender and equity considerations? And, given that a lot of literature is designed for business or other domains, what literature is relevant to research for development?

Theories

Overview

For centuries scholars have been trying to isolate what it is that separates a leader from the rest of a society; to determine the essence of leadership. Prior to the 20th century, most studies of leadership took the form of biographies of eminent military and political leaders undertaken by historians, philosophers, and political scientists. It is only since the 1900s that a distinct field of leadership studies has emerged, particularly in the business and management discourse. Over the decades, leadership theories have been categorized in varying, but often overlapping, ways by different scholars. As a starting point, I use Bolden and Kirk's four categories which capture the most prevalent themes in the literature. I then dive more deeply into a few of the most common theories or types of theories to give a better underpinning for possible conceptualizations of leadership in research for development.

Bolden and Kirk ascribe four broad categories of theory in leadership: essentialist, relational, critical, and constructionist. All of the theories in their essentialist category take a broadly objective perspective in which leadership is something done by leaders to followers, and where good leadership is seen to be a feature of qualities or behaviours of an individual leader.¹ They include "Great Man", trait, behaviour, and situational theories in this category. In contrast, relational theories argue that leadership is not an individual attribute, but a group quality as it depends on the relations between leaders and others. Power and influence and transformational theories would also fit into this category as they often recognize that there are a wide range of actors and factors which shape leadership practice.² The third category, critical theories, explore underlying dynamics of power in leadership and question assumptions such as whether leadership is inherently positive. Lastly, constructionist theories see leadership as a process of constructing shared meanings and reframing understanding.³ There is also a fifth category, sometimes called integrative theories, which combine any of the above categories into one research study. Most often, it is the non-essentialist theories which are combined.⁴ Transformative leadership, global leadership, as well as many feminist theories would fit into this final category. Today, most leadership scholars use an integrative approach, although their categories may be different from

¹ Bolden and Kirk 70

² Bolden and Kirk 70; Kets de Vries and Korotov 5

³ Bolden and Kirk 70

⁴ Mendenhall 7; Bolden and Kirk 70.

the four described above.⁵ Power, meaning-making, and relationships are thus far more common lenses for thinking about leadership in contemporary literature than integrating traits.

Essentialist Theories

The “Great Man” theory of leadership, which was the focus of early leadership studies (1900s – 1940s), and held sway until late into the 20th century, posits that leaders are born with inherent traits or attributes which followers do not possess, and which allow them to successfully direct or guide people and organizations. These studies, mainly by Anglo-American scholars, tended to focus on the particular traits of prominent military, political, or business leaders. These trait theories also took a hierarchical view of leadership, in which the leader was at the peak of the pyramid of power.⁶ Much of the discourse was concerned with identifying common traits that were correlated with leadership, in order to predict who would and who would not emerge as an effective leader.⁷ Kets de Vries and Korotov argue that as societies and organizations have evolved to become more complex, so too has our view of good leadership changed and the “Great Man” theories have been largely left behind.⁸

In the 1950s scholars started looking at what managers and leaders actually do in practice, i.e. leadership behaviour. Still an essentialist theory, the extent to which leaders were either task-oriented or people-oriented were seen as the two core dimensions of behaviour, but scholars were unable to find one specific balance of the two dimensions that could predict leadership effectiveness across all situations.⁹ This realization that context likely had an influence on leadership led in the 1960s and 70s to the emergence of situational and contingency theories.¹⁰ Here, there is a recognition that due to contextual variables, different situations may require different leadership styles.¹¹ However, critics argued that these theories were too ambiguous and context-dependent, and so were difficult to test empirically. Therefore, while the contextual perspective is still very much integrated into the study of leadership, few scholars today use a purely situational approach.¹²

Relational Theories

One of the major authors on relational theories is Mary Uhl-Bien. She uses the term relational leadership to describe the theory that leadership is a social construction created by interdependent relationships between members of an organization. Leadership is thus constructed in relational processes, rather than being particular attributes that an individual can accumulate.¹³ She contrasts this to essentialist perspectives which, although they may consider interpersonal relations, focus on the behaviour and influence of individuals as they interact with each other.¹⁴ In her theory, power is distributed rather than hierarchical, and the focus is on the collective, dynamic process of interaction (communication, dialogue, non-verbal actions) used to construct a social order in which leadership is a

⁵ Mendenhall 7, Yukl 2006

⁶ Kets de Vries and Korotov 4; Mendenhall 2, Yukl 2006

⁷ Mendenhall 3

⁸ Kets de Vries and Korotov 5

⁹ Mendenhall 3, Bass 511

¹⁰ Mendenhall 4-5

¹¹ Kets de Vries and Korotov 5

¹² Mendenhall 4-5

¹³ Uhl-Bien 655

¹⁴ Uhl-Bien 656

shared responsibility.¹⁵ She posits that her Relational Leadership Theory (RLT) gives insight into the processes by which leadership is enabled, rather than simply focusing on leadership effectiveness. By supporting a non-hierarchical view, she allows for mutually influential relationships in both directions to be legitimized as leadership.¹⁶ As theory is a way of understanding reality, one question that requires further exploration is how this non-hierarchical approach to leadership can, or should be, used in situations where hierarchy exists.

The Power-Influence group of theories sees leadership as a phenomenon based on concepts of power and authority. Leaders have the power to influence their subordinates, peers, superiors, and outside stakeholders.¹⁷ However, it is important to remember that power is not uni-directional, but a reciprocal influence relationship between leaders and followers.¹⁸ In the 1980s and 90s scholars focused on one mode of power, which came to be known as charismatic leadership or transformational leadership. In 1990 Bass wrote an article called “From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision.” In it, he argued that modern business leadership was based on a transaction, where the leader promised followers a reward for good performance and threatened discipline for poor. However, he believed that in order to achieve superior results, good leaders were those who could get employees to look beyond their self-interests for the good of the group. This result could be achieved through charisma, paying attention to emotional needs of employees, and by offering intellectually stimulating work.¹⁹ Previously, anyone with power or authority was considered a leader, and so leadership and management were used interchangeably. With transformational leadership theory came the recognition that leadership means going beyond the actions of a single, powerful, leader to a more distributed processes of influence that involves collaboration to achieve goals. This has led to greater acknowledgement of the distinction between leadership and management.²⁰ There is disagreement in the literature as to whether transformational leadership should be categorized as an essentialist, relational or constructionist theory.

Integrative Theories

I have come across very few examples of stand-alone critical theories. Instead, they are often combined into the integrative model and so I will move ahead to outlining a few major integrative theories that have the most resonance for leadership in R4D.

Transformative leadership theories first appear in literature on pedagogy, especially the work of Shields. Drawing on the work of Paulo Friere on critical pedagogy, transformative leadership is concerned with creating deep and equitable change, and so focuses on questions of justice, acknowledges power and privilege, critically questions assumptions, and emphasizes both individual achievement and the public good. In this way it is leadership not only at the organizational level, but within the wider social context.²¹ According to Shields, transformative leadership is “....leadership that explicitly attends to the moral and ethical issues related to power relationships of entire social systems

¹⁵ Uhl-Bien 662 - 664

¹⁶ Uhl –Bien 667

¹⁷ Mendenhall 5

¹⁸ Mendenhall 6, Yukl 2006

¹⁹ Bass, Mendenhall 7 Kets de Vries and Korotov 5

²⁰ Kets de Vries and Korotov 6

²¹ Shields 559,562; Weiner 89

that often perpetuate inequity and inequality in organizations.”²² Shields suggests that although definitions vary across the literature, transformative leadership is consistently seen as an activist approach to leadership that is rights-based and grounded in social justice ethics.²³ There is also an acknowledgement that transformative leaders are likely to be part of the dominant social structures, as they will have to be recognized as leaders in order to create this kind of change. Weiner argues that Freire is therefore an excellent example of a transformative leader because as Secretary of Education he was able to reorganize the political power of the administration to reflect his own critical principles. Leadership and power thus become transformative when used to reform systemically entrenched behaviours and ideas.²⁴ Caldwell et al. expand transformative leadership beyond pedagogy and argue that “...transformative leadership is an ethically-based leadership model that integrates a commitment to values and outcomes by optimizing the long-term interests of stakeholders and society and honouring moral duties owed by organizations to stakeholders.”²⁵ They take 6 elements of other leadership theories and combine them to suggest that a transformative leader: 1) can inspire followers to improve performance of an organization; 2) offer a compelling vision of the future; 3) have personal humility and aim for superb results; 4) comply with universal ethical principles and focus on both ends and means; 5) are authentically concerned with welfare of others; and 6) cultivate a learning culture.²⁶ Critics argue that transformative leadership is too idealistic and demanding, and places too much responsibility on the leader to transform large social issues.²⁷

A more recent theoretical development, in some ways very similar to transformative leadership but which specifically looks across contexts and cultures, is global leadership. Theorists such as Ayman and Korabik differentiate between cross-cultural leadership, international leadership, and global leadership. Cross-cultural leadership looks at differences between leaders from different cultures, but where the leaders are still within their own cultural context, for example comparing American versus Japanese leaders.²⁸ International leadership examines how leaders from one culture are received by followers from another.²⁹ Global leadership is sometimes used interchangeably with international leadership, but global leadership advocates stress that a global leader thinks about the impact of their actions not only on their own organization, but also to humanity as a whole and thus takes on greater economic and social responsibility.³⁰ For example, Rowe et al. argue that global leadership is collaborative, grounded in intersectionality and cultural awareness, spans both the local and global contexts, and supports positive social change.³¹

Crevani et al. also argue that we need to “go beyond heroic conceptions of leadership as lodged in the individual” and instead look at the emergence of leadership in social interactions.³² Much like the relational school, the authors argue that as the leader is a member of a group, leadership is a social interaction where leaders inspire followers to create a shared vision of the future. To them,

²² Shields 565

²³ Shields 571

²⁴ Weiner 91-93

²⁵ Caldwell 176

²⁶ Caldwell 177 - 181

²⁷ Shields 572

²⁸ Ayman and Korabik p.54-55

²⁹ Ayman and Korabik p.56

³⁰ Ayman and Korabik 58

³¹ Rowe et al. 192-194

³² Crevani et al..77

transformative leadership is therefore a “social relation where the aspirations of followers are raised to those of the leaders themselves.”³³ In this way, leadership is no longer seen as quality that is possessed by individuals, but as dispersed processes and activities constructed by people in interaction.³⁴ In order to replace the “Great Man” leadership ideal with a less individual construct, they propose two concepts to help understand leadership interactions as instances of situated practice. These concepts are co-orientation, or the understanding of possible diversity of all involved parties, and action-spacing, or the construction of possibilities and limits for individual and collective action within the local, cultural, organizational context. They suggest that using these concepts can shed more light on aspects such as power, intersectionality, and the problematic aspects of leadership.³⁵ Carroll et al. also believe we should think about leadership as practice and interaction. They argue that the leadership, as a result of its close association with management literature, is too often described in terms of competencies, which overlook that individuals do not act in isolation to others and their context.³⁶ They believe that competencies can only describe what is tangible or objective, and therefore are insufficient to capture the complex and embedded practice that is leadership.³⁷ Instead, their practice methodology is constructionist, collective, relational, narrative, contextual, and incorporates lived experience and emotion. This approach bears in mind that most actions are not planned but emerge through these interactions during lived reality.³⁸ They also suggest that because notions of heroism dominated leadership thinking for years, most data and theory is based on examinations of those with status and power. Practice theory recognizes that leadership can be dispersed throughout a group and involve a larger diversity of people.³⁹ Non-essentialist approaches provide a much more realistic view of leadership, and the ways it manifests in practice. However, they also lead to difficulties for evaluation, as the focus changes from tangible traits to more nebulous influences.

Leadership and Culture

The above theories speak mainly to what has been conceptualized as good or effective leadership. While early leadership scholars mainly focused on the European and American context, there has gradually been more interest in leadership theories that acknowledge the role of culture and how it can differ across contexts. In their 2005 article, Yan and Hunt examine at a meta-level five variables that can be used to describe differences in conceptualizations of leadership across cultures: 1) collectivism versus individualism; 2) power distance; 3) masculinity versus femininity; 4) uncertainty avoidance; and 5) fatalism.⁴⁰ Although some of these are problematic, they are accepted as valid cultural dimensions by many scholars. They argue that based on the configuration of the 5 cultural dimensions, in different contexts leadership effectiveness may either be recognition-based, dependent on fitting the characteristics of a “good” leader, or inference-based, dependent on performance.⁴¹ Dimension 1 measures to what extent people are integrated into groups in a society. This means, for example, that societies that are more collectivist do not attribute success or failure to an individual, and tend to value leaders whose behaviour conforms to social norms and traditions.⁴² Leadership

³³ Crevani et al. 78

³⁴ Crevani et al. 78-79

³⁵ Crevani et al. 81-84

³⁶ Carroll et al. 363-365

³⁷ Carroll et al. 365

³⁸ Carroll et al. 366-367, 374

³⁹ Carroll et al. 374

⁴⁰ Yan and Hunt 50

⁴¹ Yan and Hunt 51

⁴² Yan and Hunt 53

effectiveness in collectivist societies is thus more likely to be recognition-based. Dimension 2 measures the degree to which societies are based on hierarchy. Societies with a low power distance try to minimize inequality, and in those contexts leadership is likely to be more dispersed and based on capabilities. In contrast, societies with a high power distance are more hierarchical, and leadership is likely to be recognition-based and paternalistic.⁴³ Dimension 3 reflects to what degree the dominant values of a society are masculine or feminine. According to Yan and Hunt, masculine societies tend to value material success whereas feminine societies stress quality of life and interpersonal relationships.⁴⁴ For dimension 4, societies with a high uncertainty avoidance score believe strongly in the authority of rules and thus prefer formalized structures that reinforce leaders' authority. The last dimension is fatalism, which describes the extent to which people believe that they control the events in their lives. In highly fatalistic societies, achievement is thought to depend on luck or the power of a higher force (patron, God, etc.) and so a leader does not reach their position through personal merit but by chance.⁴⁵

However, Bolden and Kirk suggest that "...by reducing the study of leadership across cultures to a comparison of cultural values, we run the risk of oversimplifying and neglecting other significant factors such as the influence of history, geography, demographics, religion, and individual differences."⁴⁶ They conducted a study with participants of a British Council project which aimed to develop young African leaders in which they attempted to draw out meanings of African leadership. They argue that much of the past research on African leadership has simply aimed to provide Western managers with a better understanding of how to do business in Africa.⁴⁷ Instead, they found that multiple concepts and experiences of leadership were frequently held by same individual and co-existed with varying degrees of comfort.⁴⁸ While traditional views of age and gender were initially seen by participants as barriers to leadership, through the program they were able to construct new shared understandings which supported a non-essentialist approach to leadership.⁴⁹ Common themes in this new perspective were that leadership is relational, non-hierarchical, and integrally related to community development.⁵⁰ Bolden and Kirk conclude that culture and context are significant factors in developing leadership, and that a critical lens is needed to challenge dominant narratives of leadership. Although they do not use the term, the non-essentialist, African, vision of leadership they describe would fit very much into theories of transformative leadership.⁵¹

Airhihenbuwa et al. also speak to need for transformative leadership, specifically for African health researchers, in their article "Claim Your Space: Leadership Development as a Research Capacity Building Goal in Global Health." They define leadership as the "...capacity to advance values and skills that are critical for researchers in Global South to advance new and innovative solutions to the persistent inequality..." of disease burdens.⁵² However, the arguments they make are equally relevant for research for development more broadly. For them, leadership development is a key aspect of research capacity building, as it will enable scholars to advance Southern research agendas more effectively, create more context-appropriate responses to development issues, and transform their own realities using solutions that translate local research into action.⁵³ According to Airhihenbuwa et al.,

⁴³ Yan and Hunt 55-56

⁴⁴ Yan and Hunt 56

⁴⁵ Yan and Hunt 57

⁴⁶ Bolden and Kirk 72

⁴⁷ Bolden and Kirk 73

⁴⁸ Bolden and Kirk 78

⁴⁹ Bolden and Kirk 78-81

⁵⁰ Bolden and Kirk 80, 83

⁵¹ Bolden and Kirk 82-83

⁵² Airhihenbuwa et al. 18S

⁵³ Airhihenbuwa et al. 17S-20S

transformative leadership is necessary in this space, as transformative leaders recognize, and are critical of, the power imbalances that often exist in collaborations with Northern researchers. In response, Southern transformative leaders are able to balance excellence in research with relevance for local contexts which in turn increases the long-term sustainability of interventions.⁵⁴

Leadership, Gender, and Equity

Within the leadership discourse, leaders are often portrayed as a positive or indispensable force, always aiming for good things. However, we know that this is not always so. Not only can this assumption lead to the exclusion of some voices, but it could become seriously dangerous if followers' are coerced or negatively influenced to adopt the aspirations of the leader. Crevani et al. thus argue more leadership research should challenge notions that have been taken for granted and ensure that we study leadership practices in a way that is open to a multitude of local voices and interpretations.⁵⁵ Feminist approaches, among others, start with justice as their goal, and frame their approach to leadership from this lens.

Feminist leadership theory has many variants, most of which would significantly overlap with transformative leadership agendas. In one definition, Batliwala argues that "feminist leaders are motivated by fairness, justice and equity, and strive to keep issues of gender, race, social class, sexual orientation, and ability at the forefront."⁵⁶ Elements that are particular to feminist leadership are a focus on both individual and societal social justice issues, the inclusion of marginalized voices in the conversation, and a willingness to take risks in order to work for social transformation.⁵⁷ Feminist leadership is an activist approach to leadership, and so also must include an understanding of patriarchy and power, must reject dichotomies to find solutions grounded in lived experience, and affirm women's agency.⁵⁸

In a less critical approach, Ayman and Korabik stress that "in studying how leadership is related to gender and culture, we must understand that it is not only a manifestation of our values/motivations, but a process of interaction with others whose values/cultural assumptions may be different."⁵⁹ They therefore identify 3 models for understanding gender, culture, and global leadership. Firstly, we can understand gender as an intrapsychic process where people have gender-related personality traits which result from the socialization of gender roles. Both men and women can therefore have both masculine (task-oriented) and feminine (people-oriented) leadership characteristics. They argue that leadership research shows that gender-role orientation is a better predictor of leadership behaviour than physical gender, and that people who are seen to have androgynous characteristics, are often valued as effective leaders.⁶⁰ Kark et al. state that research shows that across organizations and cultures, "good" leadership has most often been described as having stereotypically masculine qualities by both men and women. They assert that this however is changing, and agree with Ayman and Korabik that androgyny is now often seen to be most effective. The second model explains gender as a social

⁵⁴ Airhihenbuwa et al 215 – 235

⁵⁵ Crevani et al. 80

⁵⁶ Batliwala 2010

⁵⁷ Batliwala 2010; Antrobus 165-166

⁵⁸ Antrobus 165-166

⁵⁹ Ayman and Korabik 61

⁶⁰ Ayman and Korabik 61-63

interaction process, because others more readily perceive one's physical gender characteristics and act according to this perception. Gender can therefore cause leadership stereotypes, and result in gender bias and discrimination as people assume leadership competency based on physical sex, rather than competency or internal gender identity.⁶¹ The third model sees gender as a social structural process, where gender is a status characteristic which influences access to power and privilege. Generally, male leaders are given higher levels of legitimacy and privilege and this difference in status will influence the outcomes that male or female leaders are able to achieve. This process has been seen to be particularly influential when female leaders are interacting with male followers.⁶²

Feminist and other equity-based approach to leadership do not confine themselves to looking at gender and power differentials. Instead, the concept of intersectionality is becoming more prevalent. Intersectionality "...refers to the interactivity of social identity structures such as race, class, and gender in fostering life experiences, especially experiences of privilege and oppression" and was developed over the twentieth century by advocates of black feminism.⁶³ It attempts to explore commonalities with groups whose life experience is structured by two or more disadvantageous categories to conceptualize both the particularity and universality of that experience.⁶⁴ In this way intersectionality conceives of social identity structures as interdependent, rather than independent demographic variables and emphasizes the need for the inclusion of all voices, especially of the oppressed.⁶⁵ In leadership literature, intersectionality is most commonly used in integrative and critical theories such as transformative leadership, global leadership, and feminist leadership.

Before I move into a discussion of the literature around building leaders, it is important to note the lack of literature on leadership in research for development (R4D). Although Airhihenbuwa et al. do describe why they believe transformative leadership is an appropriate theoretical framework for African researchers, and there is other similar anecdotal evidence, this is still a significant gap in the literature.

Leadership Building

It is in the literature on leadership development that the distinction between leaders versus leadership emerges most strongly. Day et al. in "Advances in leader and leadership development: A review of 25 years of research and theory" explore some of the gaps in theory around leadership development. They make a distinction between leader development, which is intrapersonal and focused on individual leaders, and leadership development, which is interpersonal and focused on enhancing leadership capacity.⁶⁶ Leadership development does not simply encompass the impact of an individual, but the building of an entire collaborative team situated in a complex context.⁶⁷ In the same way Dalakoura argues that leadership development is broader than simply developing leadership skills of individuals. Leadership development is thus relational, based on mutual respect, and involves everyone in an organization.⁶⁸ Leadership development is not the same thing as training, but instead is a learning process that occurs in context. Leaders have to develop other leaders in order to be sustainable, and

⁶¹ Ayman and Korabuk 64-65.

⁶² Ayman and Korabik 65

⁶³ GopalDas 90

⁶⁴ GopalDas 90

⁶⁵ GopalDas 91

⁶⁶⁶⁶ Day et al

⁶⁷ Kets de Vries and Korotov

⁶⁸ Dalakoura 432-433

therefore successful leadership development will result in a continuous learning and leadership culture in an organization where the collective capacity of people to effectively engage in leadership processes has been expanded.⁶⁹ While the theoretical literature is relatively silent on leaders in R4D, there are several examples of leadership building programs in this area. Most seem to focus on building research capacity and skills, rather than building leadership characteristics. There is a lack of consensus on the most effective models for building leaders are, but program components that seem to be considered good practice include mentoring, experiential learning, specific skills-based trainings, and research grants. Most programs in this sector also seem to focus on building individual leaders rather than teams or institutions.⁷⁰

Day et al. suggest that while leadership theory research goes back to the early 20th century, much less time has been given to scholarship on leadership development. Instead, there was an assumption that “if the field could identify the “correct” leadership theory, the development piece would automatically follow.” They argue that this focus has limited the usefulness of theory for developing leadership capacity, because it has been too focused on the personality and behaviours of leaders which cannot be learnt in a single intervention. Instead, leadership development is a dynamic process involving multiple individuals, and therefore understanding social interactions and building mutual trust between leaders and followers is an integral part of any leadership development initiative.⁷¹

Leadership Evaluation

Evaluation of leadership development programs is difficult because they aim to achieve intangible results such as enhanced leadership ability. King and Nesbit argue that therefore simply measuring participants’ perceptions of a program is insufficient.⁷² Commonly used evaluation models are designed to capture whether training objectives and learning are transferred back to work, but are often measuring the transfer of skills to an individual, rather than any broader impacts of leadership development such as change in the community.⁷³ Evaluation of leadership development therefore often fails to capture the complexity and discomfort of learning to lead. Instead, King and Nesbit recommend an approach that would assess whether a program successfully resulted in producing leaders who think deeply about their behaviours, especially in dynamic and complex environments.⁷⁴ They argue that a qualitative evaluation methodology is preferable because of the variety of contextual and individual factors involved.⁷⁵ The authors conducted a case study on a leadership development program offered to its employees by an Australian government organization. Their results demonstrated that “...delayed, dynamic, reflective evaluation uncovered greater detail and had potential to uncover both emotional impact of experience and meaning participants attribute to learning.”⁷⁶ Research demonstrates that there is a causal relationship between reflection and behavioural change, and therefore, evaluation done longitudinally rather than immediately after a program’s completion was better able to capture actual changes in leadership behaviours.⁷⁷ Given that evaluation findings play a crucial part in continual program adjustment, using qualitative, delayed, reflective, and dynamic evaluation processes is critical

⁶⁹ Dalakoura 435-438

⁷⁰ Jigsaw review

⁷¹ Day et al.

⁷² King and Nesbit 135

⁷³ Black and Earnest 185

⁷⁴ King and Nesbit 135-156

⁷⁵ King and Nesbit 137

⁷⁶ King and Nesbit 141

⁷⁷ King and Nesbit 143

to achieving a more complete understanding of program effectiveness and the less tangible aspects of leadership development.⁷⁸

Similarly, Black and Earnest recommend using evocative inquiry when evaluating participants' experiences of leadership development programs.⁷⁹ Using adult learning theory, they argue that adults learn best through hands-on experience, and must be motivated to learn. This motivation may be to fulfill expectations, to improve their ability to serve the community, or for professional advancement.⁸⁰ The authors recommend that evaluations use retrospective designs rather than pre/post in order to avoid response shift bias, with questions formulated in such a way to help enhance participants' recall of their experiences.⁸¹

This literature review was conducted in order to see how program conceptualizations and participant perspectives align (or not) with formal theory on leaders and leadership. As program results frameworks are designed for implementing, managing, and evaluating the program, they may or may not be based on scholarly literature. Therefore reviewing the relevant theory may surface ways to strengthen or reinforce these frameworks to better ensure that the right results, and the right things about those results, are assessed. In moving to the analysis of the four programs, it is therefore important to keep a few theoretical points in mind. Firstly, current leadership theory generally accepts that leadership goes beyond the inherent traits of the "Great Man" to include interpersonal relations and influence. Non-hierarchical approaches to leadership, whereby leadership is not necessarily conferred by status, are becoming more prevalent, as are leadership development models which favour situated learning rather than one-off trainings. Lastly, although scholars largely agree that context and gender both are important factors in understanding leadership, there is still much debate on exactly how, and what impact they have on leadership development, practice, and effectiveness.

Program Perspectives & Findings

This study examined four leadership development programs for participants in the Global South to explore conceptualizations of leadership and its evaluation. Three programs were fellowship programs for emerging research leaders in different development sectors, and one was for development practitioners and community leaders. 12 program staff, as well as external evaluators and one tertiary informant took part in face-to-face semi-structured interviews. I also received program documentation such as curriculum materials and results frameworks, which were included in the analysis. 64 participants from two of the case programs also completed an online or in person survey. This survey included both qualitative and quantitative questions designed to gather data on participants' conceptualizations of leadership in R4D, the dimensions they considered to be most critical to being a leader, and their perspective on gender and equity concerns. In studying these four programs I hoped to learn about how leadership development programs in the Global South conceptualize leadership, their approach to integrating gender and equity, and how they define and evaluate the successes and challenges of their programs. The chart below provides a visual breakdown of the demographics of the four programs, and where they overlap or are distinct.

⁷⁸ King and Nesbit 145

⁷⁹ Black and Earnest 186-187

⁸⁰ Black and Earnest 186

⁸¹ Black and Earnest 188

Program	1	2	3	4
Participant Demographics				
African				
Women Only				
High School – Bachelor Degree				
Masters Degree – Post Doctorate				
Early to Mid-Career				
Program Content				
Oriented to Researchers				

Understandings of Leadership

Program Conceptualizations of Leadership

Both of the programs for women leaders had consciously grounded their leadership building efforts in the transformative approach to leadership, although one more explicitly than the other. The others had no overt theoretical underpinnings, but would fall into the non-essentialist integrative category as their definitions of leadership went beyond inherent traits to include interpersonal relations and other factors. The women's leadership programs both also had a strong emphasis on empowerment as the means to achieving gender equality and development outcomes. One program took a feminist rights-based approach to leadership and empowerment, and thus designed their curriculum and their theory of change to reflect this. Participants are exposed to feminist readings early in the program, and approaches and obstacles to empowerment surface in both group discussions and participants' reflections in assignments. Staff at the second program, while not explicitly mentioning transformative leadership during the interview, spoke about the need for leadership values of inclusiveness, transparency, and integrity, integral parts of transformative theory. However, all informants stressed that while they might have their own perspectives on leadership, their role was not to prescribe a particular model of leadership that their participants should strive for, but to help participants discover their own styles which would work for them in their own contexts. To this end, participants in one program were exposed to a number of different models of leadership, unpacked each in detail as group, and in some cases defined core competencies themselves within their cohort. One staff member stressed that "they need their own understanding of what principles of leadership should be that will help their own organizations and communities move forward."

The two mixed gender programs took an integrative approach to leadership building that stressed relational and transformational skills such as collaboration, team management, systems-thinking, and mentorship. However, there was less evidence that they were explicitly focusing on developing leaders who could tackle systemic inequities or critique ongoing power imbalances. While there was still a desire to build leaders who could have impact on the wider community and thus lead to positive change, without the emphasis on justice and rights their approaches do not fall completely into the transformative category. Also, neither integrative program had identified a particular leadership

theory that they were basing their theories of change or curriculums on, and instead had a stronger focus on the research capacity strengthening side, with leadership building as complementary to that.

One integrative program provided training, funding, and internships to emerging researchers from the high school to post-Ph.D. level. They argued that as there will always be attrition away from research as people move forward in their careers, there needs to be mitigation strategies to ensure you have qualified research leaders at the end. Therefore, you need to start with a large pool of qualified candidates, and provide strong supports for people to transition throughout their career trajectory. As one informant explained: “obviously you need long term commitment to develop research leaders, by the time you calculate [the time to do a Master’s or PhD], and assuming everything is working smoothly and you’re getting funding every stage, [it takes] a good 15 years.” It was not, they assured me, that you are not a leader, or not doing good research before you are a post-Doctoral candidate, but after “there is an increased level of independence and control” of the research agenda, and you are able to start mentoring others and supporting the development of the next generation of leaders. Therefore, different types of capacity strengthening and leadership building are needed at different points along this path to nurture emerging leaders. This could include, practical internships, specific skills training, or funding support.

The core focus of all programs was on building individual emerging leaders. However, this was not seen as an end in itself, but rather the means to achieving downstream positive effects on institutions and communities. Programs aimed to empower individual leaders and strengthen their capacities in order to influence societal change; to allow for expansion into other spheres of influence. Transformative programs explicitly framed the discussion as leadership for change, and change across all levels from individual, organizational, community, and policy. Having many graduates at one institution was therefore seen as positive by other programs; one informant described how active alumni at the same institution often converged to start up new projects, such as new mentoring programs, which then had a wider positive effect on the organization as a whole. Staff from one program described how, while they focused on building individual leaders, their bigger hope was for organizational sustainability which in turn could lead to larger positive research impacts. “Our goal and actually our vision is African-led research.”

Two differences which were not always remarked upon, but which did come up frequently were the distinction between a manager and a leader; and the difference between capacity development and leadership. In summing up the difference between management and leadership, one informant explained “people often equate the two, but the leadership element, such as creativity or inspiring others, involves a whole range of skills beyond just being able to manage.” Another noted that it is “too shallow to focus on individual managerial qualities.” This attitude reflects a rejection of essentialist theories of leadership. Much the same was said of capacity development, although there was an acknowledgement that there is a lot of overlap between the two. One informant stressed that capacity development tended to be much more focused on program or research management. Both key informants and the literature agree that building leaders often requires a capacity strengthening element, but not all capacity development efforts will lead to the emergence of leadership.⁸² However, if you wanted to increase the likelihood of someone being able to take on a leadership role, you had to

⁸² Hubbard 2005; Enright 2006

focus on a different skillset than would be required if you were just focusing on producing competent managers or researchers.

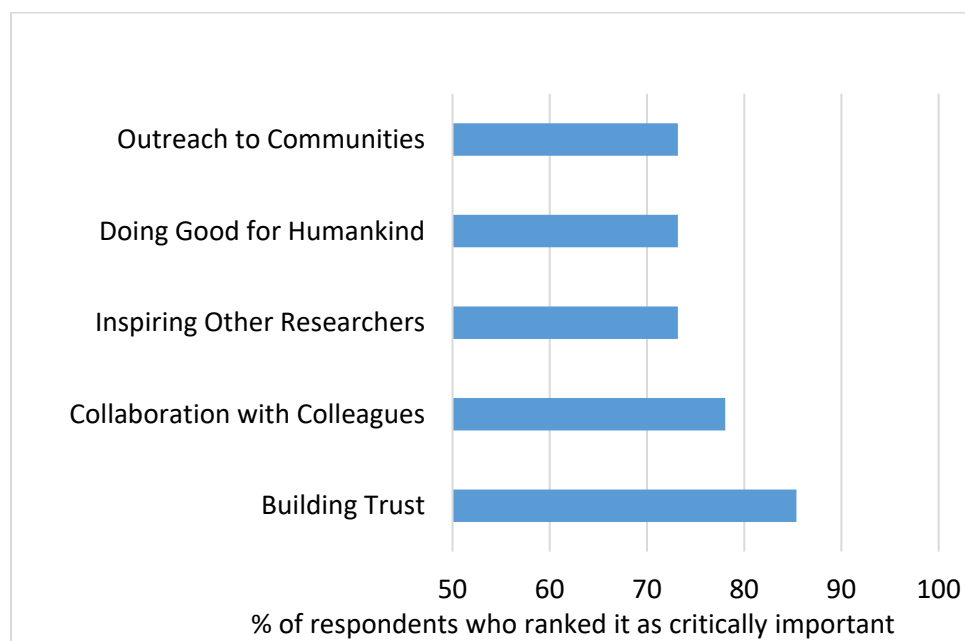
Participants' Definitions of Leadership

When participants were asked about their goals for participation in their programs, increased research capacity or improved research skills was by far the most common response. This could be further broken down into dimensions such as learning new methodologies or techniques, improving grant-writing and publishing skills, and expanding their field of knowledge in order "to become a world class researcher." This is very much aligned with the approach taken by the integrative programs which put more emphasis on research capacity building. Under the general umbrella of 'leadership skills' skills such as becoming a mentor, collaborating more with peers, being able to take leadership in their own communities, and increasing the impact of their research were frequently mentioned. Some hoped "to bridge the gap between academics and policy makers", while others wished to "enhance regional integration with future research and development leaders in my field."

Participants' definitions of leadership covered much the same ground, encompassing both hard research skills and interpersonal soft skills. For example, research leaders "...strengthen the capacity of young scholars to advance in their careers" and "...can visualize a concept, articulate the idea...and effectively execute the research project in collaboration with other researchers." Research leadership was also understood as knowledge translation; "...taking steps to ensure that recommendations, discoveries, and innovations are implemented for the benefit of society" or "the ability to steer the entire group...to achieve and surpass collective and personal goals...the research leader should be a good beacon." Research leaders thus are both excellent researchers, but also mentors, who can inspire and support their teams, and focus on making a transformative impact on the wider world. One participant listed 8 elements of leadership in their definition which nicely sums up the diversity of responses. In their definition, research leaders: have long-term vision, take a participatory approach, are self-reflective and adaptive, adopt a non-hierarchical style, make decisions rationally, are efficient at managing resources, have excellent communication skills, and believe in transparency and accountability.

However, while participants' own definitions and goals included both hard and soft skills, when asked about a leader they had worked with and admired, almost all respondents described someone with excellent people skills, rather than excellent researchers. Almost half of respondents stated that they considered their example to be a good leader because of their mentoring abilities. This was because mentors created opportunities for younger researchers to participate, they could give solutions and advice as well as critical feedback, and they were encouraging and empathetic. Mentors who were admired as leaders were also consistently described helping others to learn and grow; people who put the "priority on empowering others". One participant admired their mentor's "ability to facilitate knowledge building. He does not tell, he shows. He pushes past ones perceived boundaries and forces one to open one's mind to different ways of approaching a problem." Leaders were also described as inclusive, ready to help and interact with others "regardless of their races, culture or belief" or "without minding the gap in social classes." Lastly, leaders worked well with a team, and were "consistently listening and learning from others, allowing their own opinions/beliefs to be challenged." Leaders were therefore most admired when they were nurturing, intellectually open, and inclusive.

This differs somewhat from the programmatic approaches, as it suggests that although research capacity building is sought and valued, participants largely conceptualize leadership as being based on interpersonal skills. Also, when asked to rank potential dimensions of research leadership on a scale from relatively less important to critically important, the top 5 dimensions are all ones which correspond with transformative leadership theory:



Leadership in R4D

One area where there was much divergence in responses by both program staff and participants (both within and across programs) was whether leadership in R4D was different than leadership in other areas. Those who believed that there is no difference between good leadership in research and in other sectors contended that the same leadership skills and behaviours are relevant across many situations. Some leadership elements identified as being readily transferrable included networking, program management, mentorship, accountability, inclusivity, strategic thinking and visioning. These skills would be considered good leadership in many sectors, but used for a different purpose. As one informant put it, being a leader in development simply means “working for a different kind of profit”, that of the good of the community, rather than for the financial benefit of your corporation.

However, others were more hesitant, arguing that while there was some overlap, the business and development worlds do not always come together. It was also suggested that in a research context, a leader also needs to have at least some understanding of the research being undertaken so that they can vision what success of the project could look like. However, one informant cautioned that “people can be too insular within their disciplines, and so research leaders also need some boundary-spanning abilities.” For emerging researchers, the difference between research leadership and other academic work was that “academic research is centred on individual benefits (e.g. job promotion) whilst leadership oriented research reaches out to the community.” Leadership was “not just about publishing

and getting promoted, should be able to contribute significantly to human development in its entirety” and therefore “leaders need practical experience in the communities they are supposed to serve.” In the same way, leadership for development was seen as different from leadership in other sectors because a development leader is motivated to work for others, and because “you don’t need position or status, it starts with the shared force of humans.” This was true both in research for development, but also in the sector development more broadly. A concern of several informants was that leadership positions in research institutions often mean administrative positions, and that this is not the best use of leading scientists’ skills. Instead, organizations should be giving resources to those people to be leaders in science, rather than diluting the talent at an institution by burdening them with greater managerial responsibility.

Many of the reasons informants raised as to why leadership in R4D was different related to the fact that leaders in R4D need to contribute to the wellbeing of the greater community. Is it therefore possible that transformative leadership, with its focus on deep and equitable change for the public good, could be an approach to leadership that would satisfy both points of view? This question requires deeper exploration, but provides a starting point for further conversations on the nature of good leadership in R4D.

Gender, Equity, and Leadership

Transformative leadership theory requires us to look closely at the equity implications of leadership and leadership building to ensure that marginalized perspectives are not being further marginalized by systemic power imbalances. Therefore, the way in which gender and equity issues are taken into account in program designs and evaluations are essential to examine. Interestingly, both programs which focused exclusively on women leaders had much more robust gender modules imbedded in the curriculum, whereas those which had both male and female participants focused more on gender parity at recruitment.

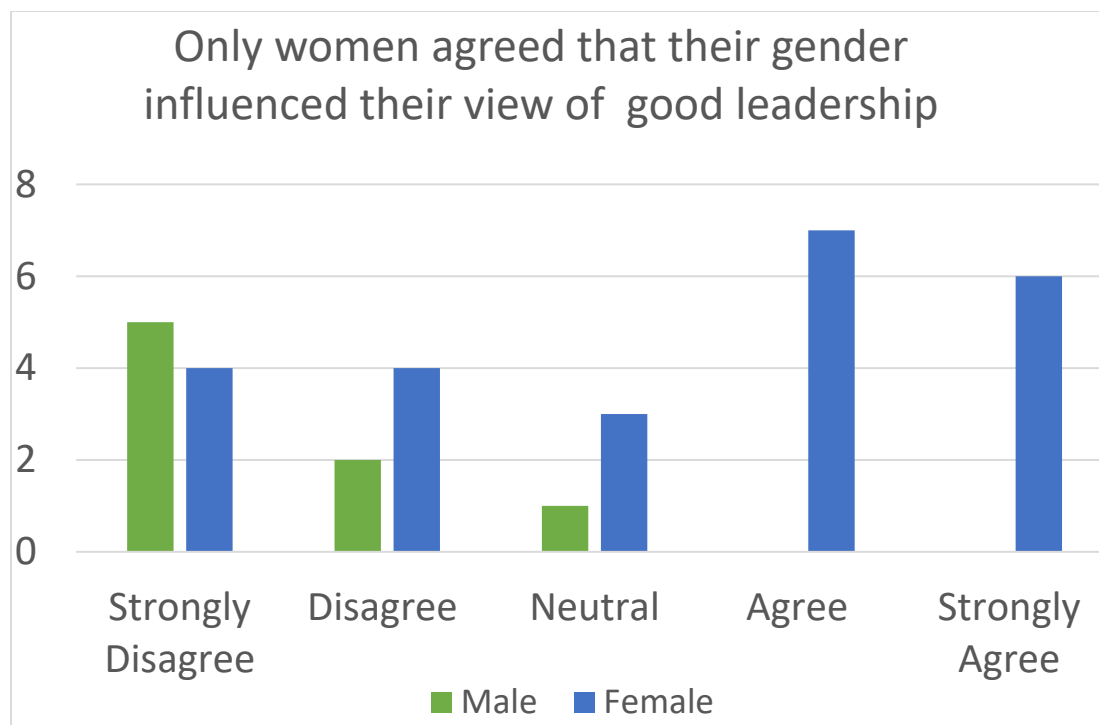
The programs for women leaders argued that empowerment was vital, and thus aimed to enable participants to become successful leaders in patriarchal societies and systems. Staff reported that they chronically heard female participants say they felt guilty for trying to promote themselves and their careers; that they were sacrificing the well-being of their families. Participants also commented that they felt unsure of themselves, and like they didn’t belong when they were in leadership positions. Programs thus aimed to give participants the tools they needed to address the obstacles faced by women leaders and ensure that participants “recognize their power and agency, and that because of the power they can have in influential spaces they also have a responsibility to lead.” One informant argued that “to keep women in research, academic training alone is insufficient” and so other kinds of soft skills trainings were required to make them more self-confident. Having more women in research is important, but so is increasing the gender responsiveness of the research itself in order to have a wider development impact. Having the first does not necessarily equal the second, and so that is why one program had chosen to start offering its modules on gender to male participants from partner organizations as well as to the female fellows.

Trying to get participants to do deep intersectional analysis, to better understand how other demographic factors can create more intense barriers and exclusions for women was also a key piece of programming for one program. Several staff mentioned how they try to get participants to consider “how can our leadership initiatives consider all people and make them part of development? Engaging

and supporting marginalized groups is the role of a leader.” Diversity in the classroom was seen as key to learning, as was the incorporation of representative materials into the curriculum. By creating this space and openness to break down barriers to understanding and bringing people into contact with those who are different from themselves, it gave participants the “ability to imagine other ways of being.” Context-relevant materials and discussions of language differences, sexual orientation, and disability were also topics which came up in interviews as needing more focus in leadership building programs to ensure that they were “raising consciousness from a Southern perspective” and emphasizing that women are not a homogenous group. One of the research programs stressed that as funding is often tied to having inter-country research teams, emerging researchers are going to have to interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds which could be a challenge for participants if they had never had this kind of exposure.

For the programs with both male and female participants, gender issues were more prevalent during participant recruitment. Both programs said they had a deliberate policy of gender parity for their cohorts. For one program, they usually had sufficient numbers of women applying to reach gender parity, and so they did not take any additional steps. The other program had much more difficulty in attracting enough qualified female candidates, and so provided extra pre-application supports to help potential female candidates develop high calibre research proposals. They had also changed their admission criteria for women so that while men were only eligible to apply within five years of completing their graduate studies, women were eligible for seven. Both programs acknowledged that one of the biggest issues facing emerging female researchers was related to being the primary caregivers. Extending the eligibility dates was meant to mitigate the fact that women may have to take time away from their careers to raise children. The other program also noted that while they themselves did not do anything different for female researchers, “there are challenges obviously that females face, in terms of you know children and doing PhDs. It’s not always easy to deal with, especially if you’re on limited time funding. Luckily now a lot of the funders are willing to make an allowance for the fact that women may take longer.”

When participants were asked whether they felt their gender influenced their view of good leadership, only women agreed. This raises the question as to whether men are sensitive to their gendered perspectives.



Female participants echoed what the program staff had mentioned, commenting on the greater obstacles they faced in becoming leaders, such as societal patriarchy, domestic expectations, or less access to education. One participant described how she “...hears all the time I’m not in the right place, shouldn’t be working here. My intelligence is ignored for physical appearance stereotypes.” Participants also felt that they were subject to different expectations as women leaders, “women feel more pressure to be likable as leaders, and pressure to not be perceived as too “bossy.” Women leaders were also thought to have to take more risks to achieve their goals, because of their positions in society. Some believed that leadership styles also varied between men and women, with women being more nurturing, inclusive, and collaborative. However, when describing leaders they admired in earlier questions, when the gender of the admired leader was specified, these same characteristics were mentioned as positive for male leaders and mentors as often as for women, illustrating that no matter what gender a leader is, these soft skills are essential.

Gender was the equity issue that received the most attention in all programs. Staff at three of the programs noted that they felt that more thought was needed on how to better manage other equity considerations at recruitment. However, they also feared participants would self-select out of the process if they were not careful on how they screened applications. For one organization, where women and youth leaders were the main target participants, I was told that when developing their programs, they had “chosen their key constituents as a way of redressing inequalities; to prioritize leadership development.” At another program I was informed that although the organization did not currently have specific recruitment policy on diversity, the informant believed it was necessary that they think about developing one as “religion, ethnicity, age are bigger factors and it is not sufficient to only talk about gender, especially in the African context.” The biggest equity challenge for another program was ensuring that they were able to get applicants from different regions of the country because of high

levels of inequality or socio-economic development in different areas. To compensate for this, they did have policies of affirmative action when recruiting for certain programs whereby they would either include more candidates from disadvantaged areas at the interview stage, or reserve a certain number of places for students who came from particular schools. Diversity also came up as an issue for programs which offered trainings to other partner organizations outside of their fellowship program, in that younger, particularly female, trainers were often dismissed as less knowledgeable by more senior participants.

Southern Perspectives

Survey respondents were asked specifically about whether they believed that there was anything from their Southern context that was missing in current leadership theory and approaches. Three main types of responses emerged to this question. The first was about the leadership skills or attitudes towards leadership that respondents believed are currently lacking in the Southern context. This included a better understanding of cultural barriers and gender disparity, better knowledge translation (to both policy makers and communities), and the need for more formal mentoring structures at African universities. Others noted cultural dimensions that they believed were holding African researchers back and thus reduced leadership efficiency in their context. For example, “research leadership should allow for merit, excellence and capability rather than just age and experience... in so many cases those with the age and experience in research do also suffer “set mind” syndrome that negates innovation in research. This is deeply ingrained in African culture that a leader is necessarily an elder by age not by merit” or “here in Nigeria, I grew up in the field believing that hiding research ideas to oneself was best...to get the highest scores...Lecturers are always more after publishing large quantity of papers and not quality papers, just for promotion. Collaboration and Networking is seriously “Missing” in our University.” There were also comments that several universities looked down upon collaborative publishing during career advancement processes, and so even though the participants believed peer collaboration was an essential leadership dimension, they found it difficult in their institutional contexts to pursue. These therefore are areas which should be monitored and tracked in order to facilitate the growth of the kinds of leaders that theory, programs, and participants all believe are key for R4D.

The second type of response concerned the danger of single narrative, and the need for there to be space for the voices of those from Southern contexts. One practical suggestion was that stakeholders should be more involved in the development of modules for leadership development programs to ensure representation of multiple perspectives, and the relevance of materials and examples. Participants also argued that they “...need to be able to write our own narrative on leadership” because there is much to learn from the Global South and “the Western world forgets about the culture of some regions”. Other respondents focused on the need for an African-led research agenda for Africa, which “...should truly and practically...be led by Africans in mutual collaboration with teams from other parts of the world. Funding agents that support research in Africa should believe in African leadership in research and endeavor [sic] to see mutual relationship in research partnerships.” There therefore needs to be effort on the part of programs, which some were already doing, to include stakeholders when designing program content and in talking about who leaders are.

The third type of response argued that there is no such thing as Southern leadership, “because context and multi-dimensionality matter” and therefore trying to think about ‘African’ or “Southern” leadership is not granular enough.

Definitions of Success and Evaluation Indicators

The second objective of this research is to move towards an evaluation framework for building emerging research leaders. I was therefore interested in looking at the results indicators and frameworks being used by programs to see how their perspectives on leadership were being captured and measured, and what implications could be drawn from this for future evaluation frameworks. Key to this, is understanding how each program and the participants define success. Each program envisioned success differently, although there was some overlap. The understanding of success also varied depending on the time scale involved, with more immediate measures examining the success of the program in delivering its training objectives, and more long-term involving the success of the participants in going on to become leaders. Some common markers of immediate success included if participants showed evidence of deep self-reflection and engagement with course materials; and whether participants found the tools and skills learned in the program useful. For programs which offered multiple levels of training for participants at different education or career levels, having a percentage of students returning for subsequent programs was also a measure of success.

Intermediate indicators of success included whether participants had been able to mobilize resources for their projects; whether they were returning to school or obtaining more senior positions; whether they were becoming mentors for others; and whether they were sharing their new knowledge and applying their new skills in their home organizations or communities. This “upscaling of skills”, especially in relation to mentorship was one of the most often mentioned sign of a leader, as that person was now inspiring and encouraging future generations. Going on to be recognized for their work in scholarly publishing or through awards was also a sign of successful leadership, as was sitting on boards of national or international bodies. One of the programs which supported African participants, commented that a successful leader in R4D also needed to be an African who remained and worked on African research agendas. Programs also felt they had been successful if they were building good quality researchers, competent and competitive post-graduates, had more graduates choosing research careers, and if they continued to have strong alumni engagement.

Others said they started their results frameworks by looking at the more tangible indicators of leaders “...which are clearly outputs [publications, conferences, mentorship], and then you move on to the less tangible which are impacts.” The challenge with evaluating impacts however was that it is often hard to attribute an impact to a particular research leader’s work. For example, in some cases it was very clear how a particular piece of research had resulted in a policy change, but in others it was a growing body of work by many researchers which eventually led to changes. Anecdotal or ad hoc evidence through alumni networks provided much of the evidence of research influence. The program was able to track alumni who had gone on to sit on national or international taskforces on an issue, or whose work had expressly been taken up by policy makers and used to implement national guidelines. They still believed strongly however that a systematic framework with clear and measurable outcomes was needed and were trying to capture some of it through more formal tracer studies.

Research leaders were also understood by several programs to be knowledge synthesizers. They are “the people who can not only generate new questions but generate them at a programmatic level,

in a wider context. [They] not only answer technical questions, but generate a larger set of coherent work that links together towards whatever goal they are achieving.” This was part of why mentorship and team building were seen to be required competencies “...because if you’re not mentoring you are not a leader, you are just one vertical line. You can only do so much alone, and so if you don’t start to build up people and people with other skill sets then you, you will not succeed.” This program therefore included a mentoring indicator in their monitoring to see if alumni had taken up their own mentees. According to one program, participants also needed to build up knowledge translation experience as research leaders, although informants also noted that until researchers had enough career experience to establish their credibility, it was difficult to interact with policy makers.

However, while all of the above elements were considered signs of the programs’ success, and evidence that new leadership abilities had been acquired, the biggest indicator of having developed a research leader was when an alumnus was able to take what they’ve learned, better their own lives, help others, and start to have a positive impact on communities; evidence that they had bettered not just their own career paths, but that their impact was moving out in layers into the community and policy spheres. One said that their goal was “ultimately people who are doing research that can actually impact on knowledge, policy, and practice.” Engaging in collaborative, peer-to-peer (and ideally South-to-South) learning and cooperation was also considered by most to be a sign of a research leader. When asked to give an example of an alumnus they considered a great example of the kind of leader their program hoped to develop, almost all informants described someone who, in the words of one respondent, “was a person where we gave them one step and then they went on to be unstoppable.”

Evaluation

All programs were using a theory of change, which in broad strokes, laid out an impact pathway in which building leadership of emerging leaders would in time lead to positive development outcomes. For the research programs, this pathway meant improving leadership and research capacity in order to influence research and policies downstream, which in turn would mean that “research will be more responsive to the needs of people on the ground”. All programs stressed that leadership development is a long-term strategy, and so although many had more immediate outcomes or indicators in their results frameworks, it was the longitudinal evaluation they found most helpful, and also the most difficult.

One common concern was that funders often want immediate results, and so programs end up tracking factors such as number and gender of participants, numbers of citations or conference presentations, or participant satisfaction with the training they received. The multitude of donor styles in evaluation was also a frustration, and the linearity to donor thinking on evaluation which forced very rigid types of data collection that was not always seen to be useful. As one informant remarked, “funders want to see immediate results, therefore we sometimes over-evaluate at the wrong moments.” The wrong moments were often too soon after the program finished. One informant explained how although they did course evaluations with participants at the end of the program to ensure they met funders’ accountability needs, this was not actually the most helpful information; what they really cared about finding out the outcomes that can only be tracked beyond the project cycle (sometimes known as learning transfer and impact levels of evaluation). They framed it as “the ‘so what?’ question; so now participants have had this experience, what are they going to take away from it and use, and what impact will it have in their wider spheres of influence?” There is an inherent tension here between the vision of the program and the requirement to evaluate too soon. As the programs are

focused on building leadership as a means to achieving development outcomes and not as an end in and of itself, it is important to pay attention to how that 'end' is captured when creating accountability frameworks. Evaluating too soon and only measuring immediate indicators will perhaps provide some evidence of leadership building, the 'means', but it will not capture evidence of success in achieving the eventual program goals. This is a misalignment of purpose that needs to be rectified so that evaluation can be useful for all involved.

Another informant discussed how their annual report to their funder included information on whether they were meeting their outputs for accountability and transparency purposes, but very little on learning or impact. However, they added that for themselves internally "...our focus is a bit more on learning...maybe we apply more of a theory of change rather than a log frame type approach. We try to ensure we are able to feel impact with more than just numbers.... a log frame says we will produce so many people etc.; a theory of change says these are things you need to do to generate a mass of African research leaders and these are the factors that will enable or hamper it." One identified challenge for African researchers in particular was a lack of sufficient funding opportunities and research jobs to keep potential research leaders in the field. One staff member noted how currently you have "the whole of Africa competing for funding from [one donor organization]...there is a difference if they were competing for funding from all the African governments, there would be a lot more to go around." Another factor, which could be a positive or negative depending on the circumstances, was the institutional environment. This included both the quality of, and access to, physical infrastructure, and the organizational culture at an institution. If an institution is not supportive of its researchers, instead of developing as leaders, "the structures end up discouraging you...and so the tendency is that people leave and go elsewhere, out of Africa or out of research altogether." Lastly, one of the most important enabling factors was having mentorship, "and mentorship beyond just your supervisor. It includes other leadership training, and someone to initially hold your hands, then your shoulder, and eventually walking along as you build your career." Their theory of change therefore tried to anticipate the challenges and mitigate them through ensuring good mentorship was available.

Two programs followed up with alumni between 6 months and 3 years after they had finished their fellowships. At this point, these programs were hoping to evaluate how the learning from their experiences had been applied or shared, and whether there had been any uptake in their home organizations. Several programs had either completed, or had plans for, studies that would go back to alumni and do life story evaluations to determine the contribution the program had made to their development as a leader. As one informant described, their program aimed to strengthen participants' ability to have influence on social change, and therefore in their evaluation they are "looking for ways to demonstrate that impact is greater than the program itself." Almost all of this evaluation was self-reported by alumni, which several programs commented on as a challenge. However, one argued that this was actually the most reliable way to understand the role of the program in someone's success as a leader. With so many other factors affecting whether someone succeeds, it is difficult for the program to evaluate "how much of a boost we gave [someone] to send [them] down that road or not...what people themselves feel gives you more authority."

Gender did not come up as an important evaluation dimension across all programs. Several mentioned that they collected gender disaggregated data, but that they had not seen a statistically significant difference in their results for men and women. One MEL specialist did stress that they prefer not to use pre/post methodologies with participants as it often is a measure of confidence rather than

leadership, and has had a strong gender divide. In their experience, men entering leadership programs tend to already rate their leadership abilities more highly than women, and so if you do before/after methodologies you see a much sharper increase in women's self-reported leadership skills which may or may not be correct. Understanding what you are actually measuring is therefore key to setting up any results framework on building leaders. In their words, "often you are not measuring for leadership per se; you are measuring for knowledge and attitudes..." One program did measure levels of empowerment, through self-reflection by alumni and assessments by their mentor.

Another often repeated challenge was the difficulty in determining the contribution, let alone attribution, of the program's role in someone's development as a leader. As described above, many of the tracer studies to determine long-term impact relied upon long form interviews with alumni. Relationships and ongoing engagement with alumni were therefore seen to be essential. One program also noted that you have to acknowledge that there is a selection bias inherent in any contribution or attribution evaluation because alumni are all people who already had an interest in research and so are already more likely to become leaders than many of their peers.

According to program staff, other essential elements for evaluating leadership included the need for flexible tools and an understanding of complexity and systems thinking ("make sure you're looking at a system so you can pinpoint positive change"). There was also a caution that sometimes the more that is done to determine indicators at the front of a program, the less the framework is able to pick up on unexpected results. "We've already set it up as to what leadership should be, and the unintended side is often more interesting" said one informant, who instead suggested coding for leadership after data has been collected.

Conclusions: Implications for Evaluation Frameworks

This paper concludes by drawing out insights from the literature, program experience, and participant perspectives that should inform evaluation frameworks for R4D leadership. The literature review points to transformative theory as being particularly relevant to inform this evaluation. Evaluation frameworks should include considerations for evaluation at the individual level in terms of both technical and "soft" skills, but also examine relationships around that individual. Evaluation frameworks should pay better attention to gender and equity. Evaluation frameworks should consider institutional change in addition to results for individuals and relationships. And finally, this research has identified types and timing of evaluation that could best suit leader and leadership development results.

Transformative theory, because of its emphasis on creating deep and equitable change, is particularly relevant for the R4D context. R4D aims for research that has a positive impact on real-world development problems to improve wellbeing, which fits well with transformative leadership's focus on social good. There is also a power dimension implicit in international development, and so a theory that requires critical assessment and aims to work towards eliminating systemic inequalities is key. Transformative leadership thus provides a useful theoretical framework for both leadership building and leadership evaluation in R4D.

At the level of individual leadership, key dimensions that must be reflected in results chains are "soft" skills such as collaboration, building trust, and empathy, as well as knowledge translation and synthesis skills. Evidence of research uptake or policy influence are perhaps first steps on the road to leadership as a means of achieving development outcomes, the ultimate end of all of the programs.

According to theory, programs, and participants, leaders must nurture other leaders. Thus, “evaluating leaders” means not just the individuals in the leadership building program, but assessing whether you are getting generations of leaders. Relationships and influence, not just individual skills and outputs are essential dimensions of leadership. Therefore, it may be that evaluation of leadership needs to include group dynamics or network analysis to accurately capture leadership in practice.

Theory also points us to the need to recognize gender and equity in results frameworks for these kinds of programs and this is an area in which frameworks could be strengthened. Although some programs have equity-oriented recruitment strategies in place, and others have integrated equity into the curriculum to some extent, this is not being fully captured in current results frameworks. There is also the issue that both female participants and programs for female participants believe that women face more obstacles to becoming leaders. Evaluation on the significance or influence of patriarchal structures on the emergence of female research leaders is therefore called for. There is also a tension in participant responses, because while many recognized inclusivity as a critical dimension of leadership, only women found their gender to be important. This raises the question of whether men are sensitive to their gendered perspective. This would be an important area for deeper engagement when designing program frameworks.

Some programs recognized the need to have their focus on individual leadership building go hand in hand with institutional change, but how to do that well was still unclear. Programs generally did not undertake any specific evaluation of alumni’s institutions to see if there had been any changes in the environment there as a result of alumni’s new leadership skills, or to see how organizational culture was impacting on the emergence of leadership in alumni. This was sometimes captured in alumni’s own self-reflections or most significant change stories, but was not a deliberate topic. One program included an institutional building component where organizations with participants in the program would also receive support, but they had found this component to be very challenging. Although they had tried to consider this in their current evaluation, it was too soon after program launch to see any significant changes. However, some of the cultural barriers highlighted by participants rely on institutional changes to overcome, for example universities becoming accepting of multi-author collaborations. Therefore, results chains need to include measures around institutional change in order to facilitate the growth of the kinds of leaders that theory, programs, and participants all believe are key for R4D.

It is also critical to remember just how long of a process leadership building is. One program suggested it can take up to 15 years for a leader to emerge, and that therefore could be the timeline for real results. However, even when evaluating shorter term results, it is important to keep the end objective in mind. So for example, if long-term success means collaborative research leaders, then evaluating collaborative outputs is essential. Programs found this particularly challenging in their accountability frameworks. Neither staff nor participants find measures such as how many grants obtained or papers published useful. Therefore, funders need to reconsider what kinds of accountability indicators they want, and the timescale on which they wish results to be reported. Short term reporting could be improved by including indicators to measure the soft skills that participants deem to be critical.

It is important to keep in mind the caution against using pre/post methodologies due to the gender bias that can emerge depending on participants’ confidence levels. Longitudinal evaluation of leadership development usually requires credible self-reflection by alumni as it is very difficult to determine what a program’s contribution to a person’s emergence as a leader has been. Tracer studies

are therefore one of the most common evaluation approaches. However, these require programs to maintain strong alumni engagement and networks in order to be able to track their graduates and their career trajectories. This work has been an attempt to strengthen how we think about evaluating leadership in R4D. Evaluation needs to measure the right results, and the right things about those results in order to push programming to achieve what is valued. This is why it is essential to integrate theory, program, and participant perspectives into results frameworks for R4D leaders.

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