

Research Protocol: Navigating the Transition from Teaching to Educational Leadership in Higher Education – Motivations and Barriers

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Abstract

This research protocol outlines a mixed-methods study exploring the transition from teaching roles to management positions within higher education in England. The study responds to growing sector interest in academic leadership development, staff retention and inclusive career progression. While existing literature acknowledges the occurrence of such transitions, it often fails to capture the lived experiences and institutional conditions that shape them. This project investigates the motivations behind lecturers' decisions to pursue or avoid management roles, as well as the structural, psychological and social barriers they encounter.

The study employs a sequential explanatory design, beginning with a structured online survey to collect demographic data and information on motivation, career stage and perceived obstacles. These findings will inform a series of semi-structured interviews aimed at deepening understanding of how professional identity, self-efficacy, institutional culture and peer support influence decision-making. Particular attention will be paid to the experiences of women and individuals from under-represented backgrounds, whose leadership pathways remain uneven and often undocumented.

Rather than assuming leadership to be a natural or desirable career endpoint, this study focuses on how opportunities arise, how they are interpreted and why some professionals choose not to pursue them. By integrating qualitative and quantitative data, the project aims to inform future research and support more inclusive leadership development practices across the higher education sector. Findings will be of value to academic developers, policy-makers and institutional leaders interested in widening participation in educational leadership.

Key words: educational leadership, higher education, career transition, teaching professionals, motivation, management roles, gender and leadership, professional identity, barriers to progression, academic careers

Introduction

The transition from teaching into educational management represents a significant career shift for many professionals working within higher education. This movement is not only a personal development milestone but also carries wider implications for leadership continuity, staff retention and institutional strategy. Despite widespread recognition of the need for effective leadership within colleges and universities, the processes by which individuals move from classroom roles into managerial posts are often under-explored. While academic literature acknowledges that transitions take place, it often fails to interrogate the personal, social and organisational conditions that shape them. Transitions are more likely to be sustained when leadership is framed in instructional or transformational terms that allow for identity continuity rather than rupture, especially when women are able to negotiate professional identity and exercise agency within institutional constraints (Aiston and Fitzgerald, 2024). This research sets out to examine the conditions under which teachers move into management, what motivates them to do so and what challenges they face along the way. It aims to offer clarity on why some educators actively pursue leadership opportunities while others, even when well qualified and capable, hesitate or withdraw from the possibility altogether.

Career motivations that lead to the decision to enter management are rarely uniform. For some individuals, the move may emerge from dissatisfaction with day-to-day teaching responsibilities or a desire to influence educational outcomes more broadly. Others may seek greater autonomy, professional recognition or career stability. A number of teachers begin to consider management after receiving encouragement from senior staff or through exposure to leadership roles during departmental responsibilities or cross-institutional projects. Previous studies suggest that these decisions often involve a complex balance between personal ambition and perceived opportunity. Intrinsic factors may include a sense of responsibility for shaping educational quality or commitment to continuous improvement. Extrinsic drivers may relate to improved remuneration, job security or the prestige associated with managerial roles (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Herzberg, 1959). Some may also view leadership as the natural endpoint of a teaching career, particularly in institutions where upward progression is tightly coupled with administrative responsibility. In this respect, motivations cannot be treated in isolation from the professional environments in which they emerge.

Barriers to transition are equally significant and may take many forms. Some are structural, including limited access to leadership training, lack of succession planning or unclear criteria for advancement. Institutional policies around hiring, promotion and appraisal may favour candidates who already possess leadership experience, thereby excluding many highly capable teachers from consideration. Gender and ethnic disparities remain a particular concern, with women and individuals from under-represented backgrounds often facing fewer opportunities to move into senior roles (Coleman, 2007; Johnson and Delmas, 2022). A lack of mentoring, exclusion from informal networks and prevailing stereotypes around leadership style may all contribute to these disparities. In some institutions, the very concept of leadership is framed in ways that deter rather than attract teaching staff, particularly when leadership is associated more with operational management than educational vision. These challenges can result in qualified individuals choosing to remain in teaching roles despite being approached to consider management or delaying their transition until later in their careers.

Social and psychological influences on the decision to pursue leadership are often overlooked, yet play a vital part in shaping individual choices. Confidence in one's ability to manage people, make decisions and influence change can strongly affect whether a teacher is willing to apply for a leadership role (Bandura, 1977; Alves *et al.*, 2025; Predoiu *et al.*, 2025; Tampus-Judaya and Escote 2025). Perceptions of leadership are often formed early in a teacher's career and may be shaped by the examples set by senior colleagues, the encouragement received from peers or mentors and the extent to which the institutional environment fosters career development. Teachers who lack visible role models or do not see leaders who reflect their own background may feel that management is not a realistic or welcoming space for them, contributing to what Eddy (2020) describes as reluctant leadership among faculty. At the same time, many transitions are not the result of formal applications but arise through informal processes, including temporary responsibilities, secondments or acting roles. These can be both opportunities and risks. While they provide experience, they may also lead to burnout or disillusionment if not properly supported. Furthermore, some educators express concern that moving into management risks distancing them from the teaching practice that originally drew them into the profession.

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to capture the complex and varied nature of the transition from teaching to management. A structured survey will collect quantitative data across several domains including demographic background, years of experience, prior

exposure to leadership, motivational factors and perceived barriers. This will allow patterns to be observed and relationships between variables to be tested. Alongside this, qualitative interviews will provide a more detailed account of how individuals experience the decision to move into leadership, how they interpret their own career journeys and how their aspirations are shaped by institutional and social influences. These interviews will also explore personal reflections on readiness, identity, satisfaction and career direction. By combining both forms of data, the study seeks to move beyond generalisations and, instead, offer a detailed understanding of what supports or impedes the shift from classroom teaching to educational leadership. The research does not assume that leadership is inherently desirable nor inevitable but instead recognises the need to understand the wide range of experiences and expectations that shape the decisions of teaching professionals.

This inquiry is timely and relevant to ongoing discussions around leadership capacity, succession planning and equality of opportunity in higher education. Institutions face growing pressure to develop internal leadership pipelines while also addressing issues of staff retention and morale. Understanding the motivations and obstacles encountered by educators can inform the design of more effective professional development programmes and ensure that talented individuals are not overlooked or discouraged. Furthermore, recognising the psychological and social factors involved in leadership transitions may help institutions to reimagine how they support staff throughout their careers, particularly those who may not fit the dominant profile of existing leadership. Rather than viewing leadership as the endpoint of a career, institutions might begin to see it as one of many possible professional pathways, allowing for more flexible, inclusive and sustainable approaches to staff development. Through its combination of empirical analysis and lived experience, this study will provide evidence to inform practice, policy and future research on career progression in higher education.

Literature Review

The literature indicates that effective transitions into management require more than capability or aspiration. They demand enabling environments that recognise teaching as a valuable foundation for leadership rather than a separate domain. The transition from a teaching-focused academic role into management within higher education continues to attract scholarly attention, not least due to its implications for professional development, leadership pipelines and institutional governance. However, the literature reflects a diversity of interpretations and theoretical orientations. Scholars have conceptualised this move not simply as an occupational upgrade but as a shift that demands reconfiguration of identity, authority and agency (Gibbons *et al.*, 2021; Bathmaker and Thomas, 2020).

This review explores current theories and evidence relating to motivations, structural influences, social and psychological dimensions and the broader educational environment that shapes these transitions. It draws on career-stage theory, self-determination theory, professional identity, scholarship and sociological analyses of capital. These are used to interrogate the ways in which institutional structures, policy regimes and workplace cultures interact with individual agency to either support or obstruct progression into leadership roles.

Career-Stage and Professional Maturity

Career-stage theory provides one of the earliest structured models for understanding professional transitions in education. Huberman's (1989) cyclic model suggested that educators pass through phases of experimentation, stabilisation and reassessment. More recent iterations argue that career transitions tend to occur during points of professional

consolidation, when teaching staff have accrued credibility and institutional familiarity (Day and Gu, 2019). Professional maturity is often accompanied by informal invitations to take on leadership responsibilities, especially in contexts where formal succession planning is weak (Kumar *et al.*, 2025).

However, readiness for leadership is not merely chronological. Research has shown that teachers at mid-career stages are most likely to feel caught between responsibilities and ambitions, especially in institutions that fail to support flexible career pathways (Courtney and McGinity, 2021; Normore and Tschannen-Moran, 2019). The assumption that leadership naturally follows teaching experience often fails to account for those who resist or delay progression due to personal, cultural or institutional concerns (Moynihan, 2025).

Motivation and Self-Determination

Motivational factors continue to be a key area of focus (Papé *et al.*, 2022a; 2022b), with self-determination theory widely used to differentiate between internal and external drivers of career progression (Ryan and Deci, 2000). In high-pressure educational environments, management roles may also be perceived as offering greater autonomy or protection from classroom burnout (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012; Harris and Jones, 2020). Intrinsic motivations include desires to influence educational policy, improve learner outcomes or exercise intellectual leadership (Leithwood *et al.*, 2020). External motivations range from increased remuneration to role prestige or a perceived reduction in workload intensity (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2019). However, these categories are not always clear-cut. The interaction between motivation and opportunity can produce hybrid motivations that evolve over time (Kumar, Thaliyan and Priya, 2025). For instance, teachers disillusioned with classroom autonomy may pursue management not out of aspiration but as a mechanism for survival in environments perceived as restrictive or overly bureaucratic (Courtney and McGinity, 2021). Gender continues to influence how motivation is experienced and articulated. Several studies have found that women are more likely to cite institutional culture and lack of encouragement as deterrents, even when they demonstrate high levels of competence and ambition (Alshdiefat *et al.*, 2024; Gaikwad and Pandey, 2026.; Blackmore, 2013).

Social Capital and Institutional Cultures

Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of capital (1986), many scholars have argued that the transition into management is highly contingent upon access to social networks, legitimacy and recognition within institutional hierarchies (Lumby and Coleman, 2007). Mentorship and professional exposure to managerial practices have been consistently linked to successful transitions (Bush and Glover, 2016; Torrence *et al.*, 2021). Leadership development programmes, when offered early in careers, tend to foster greater confidence and preparedness among staff. However, such initiatives are not evenly distributed, as teachers from minority backgrounds or those based in regional institutions frequently report limited access to these forms of social and professional capital (Gaikwad and Pandey, 2026; O'Connor, 2021). Informal pathways into leadership, through acting roles or project-based assignments, may offer experience but often lack clear validation or career progression routes. This can result in frustration, particularly where these roles are viewed as testing grounds rather than legitimate appointments (Ljungberg *et al.*, 2025; Thomson, 2020).

Identity and Psychological Readiness

Professional identity theory has become increasingly influential in exploring how teachers interpret the prospect of management. Many report ambivalence, viewing leadership as incompatible with teaching values or as requiring a departure from relational practices central to their pedagogic identity (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Sachs, 2001). Psychological readiness is not simply a matter of self-confidence; it is shaped by how individuals perceive the culture of leadership within their institution. Leadership that appears managerial or compliance-oriented is often rejected by teachers who value innovation or collaboration (Hallinger *et al.*, 2022). Conversely, institutions that frame leadership in terms of educational values are more likely to attract aspirants from teaching ranks (George *et al.*, 2025).

Self-efficacy remains an important determinant of willingness to apply for leadership roles. Academics who receive positive feedback and encouragement are more likely to see themselves as potential leaders (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2004). Role models do matter as the absence of leaders from diverse ethnic or gender backgrounds can contribute to a belief that certain identities are less welcome in management (Rossi *et al.*, 2026).

Barriers and Structural Challenges

Barriers to progression are well documented, ranging from opaque promotion procedures to entrenched leadership stereotypes. In many cases, management is seen as requiring a break from teaching, not an evolution of it (Mizrahi-Shtelman and Drori, 2022). Policies often fail to reward leadership work carried out informally or without title, leading to disillusionment among those who contribute without formal recognition (Añez and Gosálbez, 2025). Leadership preparation remains inconsistent across institutions. Some staff report being offered senior roles without adequate support or training, while others are blocked from applying due to perceived lack of experience. This has prompted calls for more coherent talent development systems that recognise diverse entry points and professional trajectories (Alshdiefat *et al.*, 2024; Torrence *et al.*, 2023). The pandemic also exacerbated existing inequalities, as rapid shifts in delivery models exposed gaps in digital leadership competencies and underscored the importance of distributed leadership structures (Zhukabayeva *et al.*, 2025; Zawacki-Richter *et al.*, 2019).

Institutional Environments and Sectoral Trends

Macro-level trends in higher education are altering the nature of leadership. Accountability regimes, competition for funding and changing student expectations have expanded the administrative load placed on academic managers (George and Mathew, 2025), which has resulted in some staff avoiding leadership, perceiving it as a departure from intellectual or pedagogical work (Townsend *et al.*, 2025). Organisational policies related to promotion, appraisal and professional development significantly shape access to leadership roles and perceptions of preparedness (Bush, 2011; Morley, 2021). Research shows that institutions that prioritise wellbeing, mentoring and career flexibility report greater satisfaction and leadership engagement among staff (Ferro-Soto and Vila-Alonso, 2025; Hafiz *et al.*, 2025). On the other hand, those that embed leadership within rigid hierarchies or performance metrics tend to discourage participation (Corcoran, 2025; Roark, 2025).

Methodology

Study Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, employing a sequential explanatory design (QUAN → QUAL). The quantitative phase will identify patterns, associations and predictors related to lecturers' transition into educational leadership roles, while the qualitative phase will provide deeper insight into the motivations, perceptions and contextual factors influencing these transitions. Integration of findings will occur at the interpretation stage to develop a comprehensive understanding of pathways into educational leadership.

Quantitative Component

Survey Design and Instrument Development

A structured questionnaire (Appendix 1) is developed to collect quantitative data examining demographic characteristics, career stage, motivations, perceived barriers and structural influences associated with transition into management roles.

The questionnaire is informed by:

- a) Existing literature on educational leadership pathways and career motivation;
- b) Established theoretical distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation;
- c) Prior empirical instruments used in studies of leadership aspiration and career progression in higher education.

Where possible, items will be adapted from validated scales reported in the literature. The questionnaire items will be subjected to expert review by at least two academics with expertise in higher education teaching and leadership to establish content validity of the questionnaire. A pilot study will be conducted with a small sample of eligible participants ($n \approx 15-20$) to test clarity, reliability and feasibility. A convenience sampling strategy will be employed to recruit participants for the pilot study. Pilot study data will be analysed using the SPSS version 29. Internal consistency will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha.

Participants and Sampling

Participants will include current and former lecturers of higher education institutions in England.

First, a non-probability purposive sampling strategy will be employed to target individuals with direct experience of the transition under study. Second, snowball sampling will be used to extend participation by inviting respondents to refer other eligible participants within their professional networks.

Quantitative Data Collection

The survey will be administered electronically using an online survey platform. Participation will be voluntary and informed consent will be obtained prior to data collection.

Key variables measured will include:

- a) Demographic characteristics (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, highest qualification, years of teaching experience);
- b) Motivational factors (intrinsic and extrinsic drivers);
- c) Perceived barriers (e.g. lack of leadership training, work-life balance, gendered expectations);

- d) Structural influences (e.g. institutional support, mentoring, leadership development opportunities).

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data will be analysed using SPSS version 29.

Analytical procedures will include:

- a) Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, medians and standard deviations) to summarise participant characteristics and key variables;
- b) Cross-tabulations and chi-square tests to explore associations between demographic variables and leadership transition patterns;
- c) Logistic regression analysis to examine predictors of transition into leadership roles, including years of experience, motivation, access to training and institutional support.

Qualitative Component

Interview Design and Instrument

The qualitative phase will employ semi-structured interviews to explore participants' lived experiences of transitioning from teaching to management. A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix 2) is developed based on the study's conceptual focus on social, psychological and structural influences. This semi-structured interview guide will be further refined based on the quantitative findings.

Interview questions will explore:

- a) Personal motivations for pursuing leadership roles;
- b) Psychological factors such as confidence, self-efficacy and leadership identity;
- c) Social influences, including peer networks, mentoring relationships and professional communities;
- d) Structural conditions shaping career progression, including institutional culture, policies and access to leadership development.

Participants and Sampling (Qualitative)

A sub-sample of survey respondents who indicate willingness to participate in interviews will be selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in career stage, gender and institutional context. Approximately 15–25 interviews will be conducted, or until data saturation is achieved.

Qualitative Data Collection

Interviews will be conducted online or in person, depending on participant preference and will be audio-recorded with consent. Interviews will be transcribed verbatim and anonymised prior to analysis.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data will be analysed using thematic analysis, following established procedures of familiarisation, coding, theme development and refinement. Elements of a grounded theory approach will be incorporated to allow concepts and relationships related to leadership transition to emerge inductively from the data.

Analytical attention will focus on:

- a) Social influences, including peer support, mentorship and workplace culture;

- b) Psychological factors, such as leadership confidence, attitudes toward management and decision-making self-efficacy;
- c) Structural conditions, including contrasts between classroom and administrative environments, institutional expectations and access to leadership training and digital resources.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Integration will occur at the interpretation and discussion stage, where qualitative findings will be used to explain and contextualise quantitative results. This approach will enable the identification of convergences, divergences and complementarities between datasets, strengthening the explanatory power of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval will be received from the London Churchill College Research Ethics committee prior to data collection. Participants will be informed of the study's purpose, voluntary nature, confidentiality and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. All data will be anonymised and stored securely in accordance with data protection regulations.

Discussion

This discussion will present an interpretative synthesis of data generated through both survey responses and qualitative interviews. Rather than seeking to confirm hypotheses, the study is structured to surface recurring patterns, significant differences and unexpected features in how teaching professionals encounter and describe the prospect of transition into management roles. The intention is to explore the range of ways in which academic staff engage with leadership opportunities, including those who embrace, resist or disengage from them altogether.

The design allows for close examination of how motivations for pursuing management may be shaped by previous experience, professional values and perceptions of role expectations. Particular attention will be given to distinctions between internally driven reasons and those that reflect organisational or social influence. Differences in motivation by age, career stage, or prior exposure to leadership responsibilities will be considered, without assuming fixed relationships or directionality.

The interview component will further explore how transitions are narrated over time. These accounts may reflect hesitancy, confidence, external encouragement or internal questioning. Experiences of mentorship and peer support are anticipated as areas of interest, particularly in relation to whether participants describe feeling prepared for leadership or excluded from opportunities. The influence of identity, professional, personal or cultural, may also be reflected in how individuals assess their readiness, belonging or aspiration in relation to management roles.

Gender and ethnic disparities have been recognised in prior research as factors that influence who accesses leadership and how. This study includes instruments that will enable examination of whether and how such disparities emerge in participants' accounts. Institutional type, size and policy environment will also be considered as possible contributing conditions.

Key Areas of Exploration

The data will be read for patterns relating to:

- a) Career shifts in relation to professional stage, educational background and institutional experience
- b) The role of mentorship, sponsorship or informal encouragement in shaping leadership intentions
- c) Comparisons between internally motivated decisions and those prompted by structural conditions
- d) Reported differences in access or experience across gender and ethnic groups

The study does not presume these to be the only or most significant themes; they are included in the design as areas of interest to be examined through the data.

Anticipated Relevance for Educational Policy

While the study is not structured to deliver policy recommendations directly, the findings may inform ongoing conversations around:

- The place of mentorship in leadership development for teaching staff
- The design and timing of leadership preparation programmes within academic careers
- The visibility and accessibility of leadership pathways across institutional types
- The identification and reduction of barriers to progression that affect under-represented groups

These issues will be addressed in relation to what the data show, not from prior assumption. The discussion will consider how reported experiences may inform the review or refinement of institutional and sector-level policy approaches to leadership development and staff progression.

Conclusions and Further Research

This inquiry is not intended to produce a final account of transition into management but to contribute to a more grounded understanding of how such transitions are experienced by those involved. The discussion will focus on what emerges from the data rather than prescribing ideal models or pathways. Attention will be given to where findings confirm, challenge or complicate earlier literature, particularly in relation to identity, motivation and institutional culture.

The study may also indicate directions for future investigation. These might include:

- a) Cross-national studies exploring whether findings are consistent across different higher education systems
- b) Longitudinal research that tracks how professional identities and leadership engagement evolve over time
- c) Evaluations of specific interventions or programmes designed to support leadership development
- d) Studies that focus explicitly on those who choose not to enter management despite opportunity

Such areas will be proposed where supported by the data and only in terms of possibility rather than prescription.

Appendix 1: the Questionnaire

Section 1: Welcome and Consent

You are invited to take part in a study exploring experiences and decisions related to leadership and teaching roles in higher education. This survey is confidential and voluntary. It should take around 10–12 minutes to complete. Your answers will be used for academic research purposes only.

Required Question (Multiple choice):

Do you consent to take part in this study?

- Yes, I agree to participate
- No, I do not wish to participate (→ *End form*)

Section 2: Screening Question (Key branching logic applied)

Question (Multiple choice – required)

Which best describes your current role in higher education?

1. I teach and hold a management or leadership position (e.g. programme leader, head of department) (→ Group 1)
 2. I teach but have never held a management or leadership position (→ Group 2)
 3. I currently work in a management or leadership role and no longer teach (→ Group 3)
 4. I am no longer working in higher education (→ *End form*)
-

Three Groups generated by the answers:

Group 1 – Teach and Manage

Group 2 – Only Teach – Never Managed

Group 3 – In Management – No Longer Teach

Section A: Background Information (All groups complete)

Q1. What is your age group?

- Under 30
- 30–39
- 40–49
- 50–59
- 60 or above

Q2. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

Q3. What is your ethnic background?

- White
- Black or Black British
- Asian or Asian British
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- Other (please specify):
- Prefer not to say

Q4. What is your highest level of education?

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate (PhD or equivalent)
- Other (please specify):

Q5. How many years have you worked in higher education teaching?

- Fewer than 5
- 5 to 9
- 10 to 14
- 15 to 19
- 20 or more

Q6. What type of institution do you currently work in?

- Research university
- Teaching-focused university
- Further education college
- Private higher education provider
- Other (please specify):

Group 1: Teach and Manage (If "teach and manage" selected)

Section A: Background Information Questions 1-6. (Required data - All Groups)
Sections B through D: (Likert Scale – 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)
Section B: Motivations for Leadership Role

What motivated you to take on a management or leadership role?

- I wanted to contribute beyond the classroom
- I was motivated by the opportunity for greater income
- I was encouraged by colleagues or mentors
- I felt confident in taking on leadership
- It was expected of me within the institution
- I was dissatisfied with aspects of classroom teaching
- I viewed it as a natural next step

Section C: Barriers and Challenges

To what extent did the following factors present barriers when taking on leadership?

- Lack of training or preparation
- Lack of support from senior staff
- Gender, age or ethnicity
- Workload or time constraints
- Limited mentorship or guidance
- Doubts about my ability to lead
- Concerns about work–life balance

Section D: Institutional Factors

How much do you agree with the following statements?

- My institution supports leadership development
- I had access to a mentor or coaching
- Leadership opportunities are openly communicated
- My teaching role was considered in workload allocation
- Digital resources were helpful in preparing me for leadership

Section E: Role Balance and Future Plans

Q7. How is your time currently divided between teaching and management?

- Mostly teaching
- Roughly equal
- Mostly management
- It varies considerably

Q8. Which best reflects your preferred future role?

- More teaching
- More management
- Equal balance

- No preference

Section F: Optional Comments

Open Text:

Please share any comments about your experience of holding both teaching and responsibilities

Group 2: Only Teach – Never Managed. (If I teach, but never held a leadership role selected.

Section A: Background Information Questions 1-6. (Required data - All Groups)

Sections B through D: (Likert Scale – 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)

Section B: Reasons for Not Pursuing a Leadership Role

Please indicate how much you agree with the following:

- I am satisfied with my current teaching role
- I do not feel prepared for leadership
- I have not been encouraged to apply
- Leadership does not appeal to me
- I believe it would reduce my work–life balance
- I have applied for roles but was unsuccessful
- There are few visible opportunities in my institution

Section C: Perceived Barriers

To what extent do these factors prevent you from pursuing leadership?

- Lack of training
- Lack of time or flexibility
- Limited access to mentors or coaching
- Belief that my background may limit my chances
- No clear path to leadership
- Concerns about team management
- Lack of information on available roles

Section D: Institutional Factors (Same as Group 1)

Section E: Interest in Leadership

Q7. Do you see yourself moving into a leadership role in the future?

- Yes, definitely
-

- Possibly
- Not sure
- Unlikely
- No

Q8. What would make you more likely to consider leadership? (Tick all that apply)

- Training
- Mentorship
- Higher pay
- Encouragement from colleagues
- Flexible workload
- Better institutional culture
- Other (please specify):

Section F: Optional Comments

Open Text:

Please share any comments about your decision not to take on a leadership role

Group 3: In Management – No Longer Teach (If “currently in management and no longer teach” selected)

Section A: Background Information Questions 1-6. (Required data - All Groups)

Sections B through D: (Likert Scale – 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)

Section B: Motivations (Same as Group 1)

Section C: Barriers (Same as Group 1)

Section D: Institutional Factors (Same as Group 1)

Section E: Career Progression

Q7. At what stage did you first consider moving into leadership?

- Within the first 5 years of teaching
- After 5–10 years of teaching
- After more than 10 years
- After a major career event

Q8. How long did it take from first considering leadership to getting your first management role?

- Less than 1 year
- 1–2 years

- 3–5 years
- More than 5 years

Q9. Was your move into management planned?

- Yes, and I actively pursued it
- No, but I welcomed the opportunity
- No, and I was unsure about the decision
- Other (please specify):

Section F: Optional Comments

Open Text:

Please share any reflections on your leadership journey or the transition away from teaching

Appendix 2: Qualitative Semi-structured Interview Guide

Qualitative Data Collection. Method: Open-Ended Questionnaire (Written Reflections)

Section 1: Consent and Context

Introduction:

Thank you for participating in this qualitative study. This form invites you to share your personal experiences, views and reflections on your career path in higher education. Your responses are confidential. You are free to skip any question. There are no right or wrong answers, we are interested in your perspective.

Section 2: Core Qualitative Questions

Personal Narrative: Individual Responses

Q1. *Please describe your journey in higher education so far. What led you into teaching and, if applicable, into leadership or management?*

Role Identity

Q2. *How do you currently view your role as an educator and/or leader? How has this changed over time, if at all?*

Turning Points or Decisions

Q3. *Describe a moment or decision that significantly influenced your move (or decision not to move) into management?*

Motivations

Q4. *What motivated you to consider (or reject) leadership roles in your institution? Were there personal, professional or other reasons?*

Challenges

Q5. *What have been the biggest challenges or difficulties in your career so far, particularly related to progression or role changes?*

Institutional Environment

Q6. *How has your institution supported or hindered your leadership ambitions or professional development?*

Identity and Confidence

Q7. *How confident have you felt in your ability to lead others, influence decisions or take on strategic responsibilities? Why?*

Equity and Inclusion

Q8. *Do you feel your background (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, social class, etc.) has influenced your career path in higher education? If so, how?*

Future Outlook

Q9. *What do you see as the next step in your career? What would help or hinder that progression?*

Final Reflections

Q10. *Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences of teaching, leadership or career progression in higher education?*

Follow-up

Would you be willing to take part in a short follow-up interview (approximately 30 minutes) to discuss your experiences in more detail?

Yes – I'm happy to be contacted for an interview

No – I'd prefer not to take part in a follow-up interview

If yes, please provide your preferred name and contact email:

(Text box – optional)

Interview topic guidelines by Group

Group 1: Teach and Manage (Dual Role)

Opening Prompt

"Can you tell me a little about your current role and how you came to hold both teaching and leadership responsibilities?"

Areas and Questions Suggested for Group 1 Interviews.

1. Career Journey

What influenced your move into a leadership role while continuing to teach?

Was this a personal goal, or did it emerge from institutional needs?

2. Role Balance & Tensions

How do you currently balance your leadership and teaching responsibilities?

What challenges arise from holding both roles simultaneously?

Are there aspects you feel you cannot do well because of time or focus?

3. Institutional Support

Has your institution made it easier or harder to manage both roles?

What forms of support have been most (or least) helpful?

4. Identity & Confidence

Do you see yourself more as a teacher or a leader?

How has this dual role affected your confidence, sense of purpose or professional identity?

5. Future Thinking

Where do you see yourself going next, more teaching, more leadership or something else?

Group 2: Only Teach – Never Moved into Leadership

Opening Prompt

"Can you share your career path so far and how you've come to remain primarily in a teaching role?"

Suggested Questions

1 Leadership Consideration

Have you ever thought about moving into a management or leadership role?

What made you consider it — and what stopped you?

2 Perceived Barriers

Are there specific barriers (personal, institutional, cultural) that make leadership feel out of reach or unappealing?

3 Support & Culture

Have senior staff or peers ever encouraged you to take on a leadership role?

What does the culture of leadership feel like in your institution?

4 Confidence & Readiness

Do you feel ready or prepared for leadership?

If not, what would make you feel more confident or supported?

5 Aspirations

Do you see yourself remaining in a teaching role long-term?

Would anything shift your thinking about leadership?

Group 3: Fully in Management (No Longer Teach)

Opening Prompt

"Could you walk me through your transition from teaching into a full-time leadership or management role?"

Suggested Questions

1. Transition Decision

When did you first consider leaving teaching to pursue leadership?

What influenced or motivated that decision?

2. Adjustment & Challenges

What was the biggest challenge in moving fully into management?

Was there anything you wish you had known beforehand?

3. Loss & Identity Shift

Did you miss teaching?

How has your professional identity changed since taking on this role?

4. Institutional Journey

What role did your institution play in your progression?

Were there clear pathways or was it self-driven?

5. Leadership Style & Vision

How would you describe your leadership style now?

How do you support others who may want to follow a similar path?

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