



**Keeping Perspective in Academic Leadership Roles:**

Insights from the Rectors of Icelandic Universities

Kolbrún Arnardóttir

Thesis of 12 ECTS credits

**Master of Project Management (MPM)**

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Engineering  
at Reykjavík University in partial fulfillment  
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**Master of Project Management**

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# KEEPING PERSPECTIVE IN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP ROLES: INSIGHTS FROM THE RECTORS OF ICELANDIC UNIVERSITIES

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## ABSTRACT

Since the position of 'rector' is the highest in Icelandic universities, taking over such a role is a major challenge as well as a sensitive change process for the individual and for the organisation.

This paper introduces a change leadership model, i.e., *the Oroboros Leadership Model*. The research questions are: (1) Is it possible to provide academic leaders with a tool or a method that helps them guarantee their success in socializing within their university and to be better able to implement their vision? (2) Is academic leadership different from leadership in other contexts? (3) Is managing/leading universities different than managing/leading other organisations?

To answer these questions, a qualitative research was conducted in which all university rectors in Iceland were asked questions about themselves, universities and the Oroboros Leadership Model. The conclusion is that a change leadership model like the one introduced in this paper could be very beneficial to leaders as they take on their new roles.

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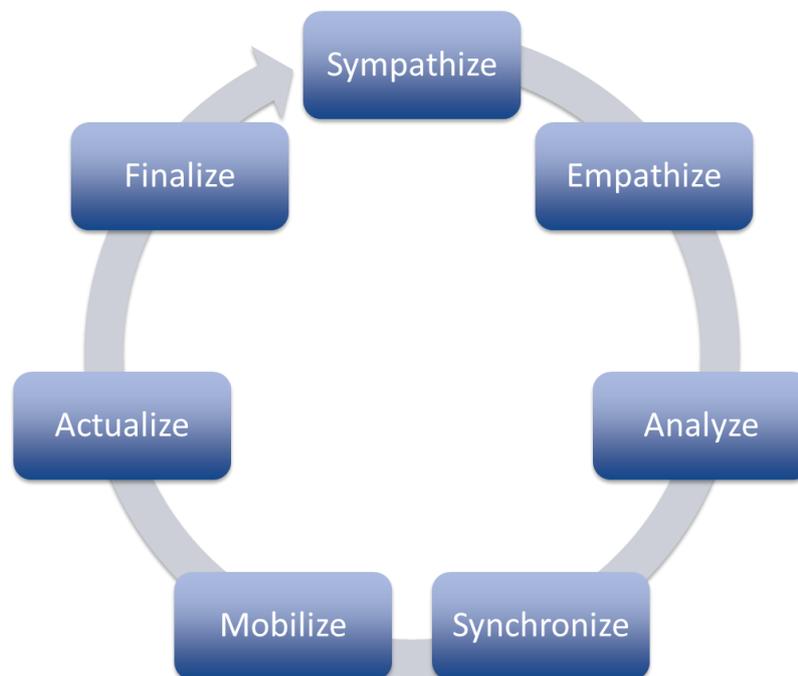
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The position of 'rector' is the highest within Icelandic universities. When a person takes on this new role as a rector and therefore an academic leader without any help or guidance it will always be a major challenge. The rector needs to gain influence in the university and lead very diverse groups of experts in various fields, as well as meeting many other challenges. Guidance can help: it might be in the form of a tool or a method that the academic leader can use as a framework of things that need to be done.

The basis for this paper is a new leadership model that was created by Dr. Haukur Ingi Jonasson (2011), *The Oroboros Change Leadership Model*. This model was created to lead changes in sensitive change projects. However this model could be used for other leadership challenges as well, such as a guide for those taking on new leadership roles.

The model is set up in a circle of seven steps. Within each step, a set of tools to work with is put forward. See figure 1.



**Figure 1 The Orebro's Change Leadership Model**

In the first step, *sympathize*, the leader is encouraged to show sympathy for his co-workers and the people he is going to lead. He can do that by observing, feeling, showing concern and interest, counselling and comforting. In the second step, *empathize*, the leader should empathise with his co-workers. He or she does that by listening, identifying with his co-workers, trying to understand them, and share feelings. The third step is to *analyze*. The leader should now analyze the situation and collect data by examining, studying, inspecting, researching, reviewing and evaluating. The fourth step is to *synchronize* and is about examination of process alignment within the organization and strategic planning. The fifth

step is to *mobilize*. In this step, the leader should motivate the team from the core and rally co-workers. The sixth step, *actualize*, is where a renewal of professionalism should occur. The leader should make reality of his vision and introduce it to employees. In the seventh and last step, *finalize*, the work should be completed and there should be some finishing touches done at the workplace.

The model is set up as a circle to demonstrate that the process can or should be renewed as often as needed. Although the seventh step is finalized, it doesn't mean that the situation is perfect and that there is no need for further actions.

The aim of this research is to answer the following questions: (1) Is it possible to provide academic leaders with a tool or a method that helps them guarantee their success in socializing within their university and to be better able to implement their vision? (2) Is academic leadership different from leadership in other contexts? (3) Is managing/leading universities different than managing/leading other organisations?

This paper will first provide an overview of the pertinent literature. Following chapters cover the research method and results, an overview of the methodology that was used in conducting the research and then the results will be presented. In the discussion chapter, the results will be interpreted and viewed in the context of the research questions. The conclusions will highlight the principal results of this study.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides an overview of the substantive topics of this paper. It is divided into five subchapters. The first sub-chapter is about rectors , which are the academic leaders in Iceland. The second is about academic leadership . The third is about management and leadership. The fourth is an overview of change management and the importance of combining it with change leadership. The final sub-chapter is about qualitative research methods, which is the theoretical approach that was used in this research.

### **RECTORS**

In Iceland there are seven universities. Four of them are public: University of Iceland (Háskóli Íslands), University of Akureyri (Háskólinn á Akureyri), Hólar University College (Háskólinn á Hólum) and The Agricultural University of Iceland (Landbúnaðarháskóli Íslands). The other three are private: Reykjavik University (Háskólinn í Reykjavík), Bifrost University (Háskólinn á Bifröst) and Iceland Academy of the Arts (Listaháskóli Íslands). These universities differ in size and complexity but all have common academic roles and duties. The academic leaders of these Icelandic universities are called rectors and are the head of their university.

In Iceland the rectors of the universities have to follow strict guidance of their roles as codified in Icelandic law. According to these laws, the rectors of public universities for example are responsible for and must supervise all activities of the university the universities are independent educational organisations but are governed by the Ministry of Education,

Science and culture. They conduct teaching, researches, preservation of knowledge, exploration and creativity of science, education, technology and arts. (Lög um Háskóla Íslands nr 41/1999; Lög um háskóla 63/2006; Lög um opinbera háskóla nr. 85/2008).

### **ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP**

The roles of an academic leader are very complicated. The academic leader needs to manage a very complex organization and with that a group of very diverse staff members, including specialists of various fields. It has been said often that managing academics is like herding cats, i.e., it's either pointless or impossible (Gallos, 2002; Scott, Coates & Anderson, 2008). Therefore a university rector needs to be a very strong leader (Ramsden, 1998).

There have been speculations about whether academic leadership differs in any way from leadership in other contexts. The reasons might be that academics are often extraordinarily talented, and that they can be self-absorbed, hesitant to accept authority, ambiguous towards teams, resistant towards controls and processes, and want academic freedom. That means that leadership in universities must be through influence rather than through mandate or power. On the other hand, there is little existing research that sheds a light on a difference between academic leadership and other leadership (Scott, Coates & Anderson, 2008)

### **MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

Management and leadership are connected in many ways. John Kotter (2001) says that they are different but complementary and cannot function without one another. That's why both are necessary for success. Good management and poor leadership or good leadership and poor management is not very efficient because management is all about planning, coping with complexity and execution.

Leadership is on the other hand about coping with change and providing vision; it is about gaining influence and getting people to follow the vision. But that is also not enough to maintain a healthy organization. Good management brings order and without order things can get chaotic in a way that can threaten the existence of the organization. (Kotter, 2001; Gill, 2003).

However in a fast moving business environment change is necessary and then leadership becomes very crucial. The leader needs to create a sense of urgency for the change, create a vision and maintain that vision through the change process. The hard part is combining both good management and strong leadership and balancing it (Kotter, 2001; Jónasson & Ingason 2011). For change it is just as important to have a good combination of both management and leadership as for any organization. In universities these two roles are as important as in any other organization (Scott, Coates & Anderson, 2008)

### **CHANGE MANAGEMENT AND CHANGE LEADERSHIP**

Change management has been a popular topic for years. Many articles and books have been written about the subject. The literature contains many change management tools that help leaders/managers to keep the change under control. Few of the most famous tools are for example: Kotter's *8 steps*. These steps are: 1. Establishing a sense of urgency, 2. Creating

the guiding coalition, 3. Developing a vision and strategy, 4. Communicating the change vision, 5. Empowering broad-based action, 6. Generating short-term wins, 7. Consolidating gains and producing more change, 8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture (Kotter, 1996). *Lewin's three stages for bringing about change*. The three phases you have to go through to make change happen are: 1. Unfreezing. 2. Moving and 3. Refreezing (De Mascia, 2012). Peters and Waterman's model, *The McKinseys 7-S framework*. A framework of seven variables that are important for change. They are; structure, systems, style, staff, skills, strategy and shared values (Peters & Waterman Jr., 1982). *The seven C's framework* consists of seven stages and within each stage there are sub-elements and diagnostic tools. The stages are client, clarify, create, change, confirm, continue and close (Cope, 2003). These are just to name a few tools that have been introduced to the field of change management.

Change means "making or becoming different" (Merriam-webster.com). Inside an organization, like a university, change can cover all kinds of reorganizations, changes in the facilities and changes in processes. New leaders bring new vision into the organization and may change the way things have been done for a long time. Few change projects are a complete success and they are likely to fail if they are not managed well (Kotter, 1990). Many change projects encounter opposition, which costs money, time and emotional effort. One of the main reasons for this is resistance to change (Myers, Hulks & Wiggins, 2012) People react differently to change, they can be resistant and not willing to go through with it, especially when they are not informed about what is going to happen and how it will be done (De Mascia, 2012). Change management can be used to keep the changes under control with a set of tools and procedures and get the organizations, teams and individuals to a desired future state (Kotter, 2011).

In recent years there has been more awareness about the value of change leadership and that only change management is not enough for a successful change, it is also necessary to have good leadership. Change leadership is different from change management in a way that it is all about the visions, processes and the driving forces of transformation (Kotter, 2011). However for the best results it is important to have good management as well as good leadership. Change must be well organized, planned and directed which is done with management. However it is the leadership that makes the difference by introducing the change to the organization (Kotter, 1999).

#### **QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS**

Qualitative researches seek to understand people and the social and cultural contexts of their lives. This can be studied with various forms of qualitative research methods, for example interviews, case studies and questionnaires. This form of research was first developed in the social sciences, where the center of research is often values and views of people that are often difficult or impossible to measure. The main reason for doing qualitative research instead of quantitative research is that you get deeper understanding of the participants' experience, values, feelings and opinions. (Myers & Avison, 1997; Halldórsdóttir, 2013). When obtaining information with interviews it is important to use

open questions, that is questions should give the participants opportunity to explain their answers not questions that only require a yes or no answer (Jónasson & Ingason, 2012).

### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

To get answers to the research questions a qualitative research method was chosen and therefore open questions and interviews were performed. It is important to ask open questions because the aim is to get more detailed answers and deeper understanding of the participant's experiences, values, feelings and opinions. The research questions are: (1) Is it possible to provide academic leaders with a tool or a method that helps guarantee their success in socializing within their university and to be better able to implement their vision. (2) Is academic leadership different then leadership in other context? (3) Is managing/leading universities different than managing/leading other organisations?

The ideal participants for this research are academic leaders, so it was decided to send seven open questions to the rectors of all the seven Icelandic universities. The questions were sent by e-mail in which the aim of the research was also explained. The rectors were asked for interviews were they would meet with the researcher to answer the questions. If they were not able to meet with the researcher, they were asked to send their answers in writing via e-mail.

At the time the research was taking place the rectors were very busy and some were travelling abroad. Because of the tight schedule of the research, they had to be given a choice how they would answer the questions.

As mentioned before, the data was gathered both through interviews with the rectors and by written answers. Five of the seven rectors were available for an interview in person or through Skype and two of them sent their answers by e-mail. Due to how different it is to answer questions directly to an interviewer or write down the answers this could bias the results. However, the researcher is confident that the "responders" delivered their most honest answers both in the interviews and in their written answers as they all are responsible for academic work themselves.

The seven questions asked are the following:

1. a) What qualities/features does an academic leader need to possess (please name all the qualities/features that come to mind, personal characteristics, experience, education etc.).  
b) What qualities/features do you think are the most important?
2. What management style do you think suits universities the best?
3. What do you think is the best way to get people to commit to you and your vision?
4. How do you think an individual that takes over as a new manager/rector should act?
5. What did you do to get to people when you started as the rector, how you introduce yourself and your vision?

6. Do you think that it could be helpful to work with a predefined/defined leadership model when new management/academic leader takes over? If so, how would you think it should be?
7. If you look at the following picture [picture shown] you can see a part of a leadership model that has been built to lead change in organizations. When you see these words (sympathize, empathize, analyse, synchronize, mobilize, actualize and finalize), what do you think? Could they belong in your approach on management/leadership process?

#### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

In this chapter the results of the seven questions that the rectors were asked to answer will be set forth individually.

Seven questions were sent through e-mail to all seven university rectors in Iceland. They were invited to an interview to answer the questions in person. If that could not be arranged they were asked to submit their answers in writing by e-mail. Five of them were able to talk to the researcher and two of the rectors submitted their answers in writing. All of the seven rectors answered the questions so the response rate was 100%. Out of the seven rectors three of them are females and four males. All results are anonymous but to see how the same rector answered through all the questions they have randomly been assigned letters from A to G.

Following are highlights of the results to each question.

1. Results for the first question: *“What qualities/features does an academic leader need to possess and what qualities/features do you think are the most important? (The participants/rectors were asked to name all qualities that came to mind, personal traits, experience and education etc.)*

All of the Rectors mentioned how important it is to have good management and leadership skills. They also mentioned the need for a clear vision and how necessary it is to see the big picture. The academic leader needs to know where he wants to go and not let go of the vision. The academic leader also has to be able to manage change and organizational development. One of them added that a good vision is crucial in crisis:

“Although we have been through some very difficult times in the past years due to the economic crisis there will always be crisis but it helps a lot in crisis to know where you are going, you may need to go differently about it and it may take longer but you always keep a clear vision and that’s what matters”(Rector B)

An academic leader needs to:

“Have a good overview as a project manager/leader“(Rector A)

“You could say that the rector needs to be a good leader and in my opinion he really needs to be where he is needed the most. He is there to motivate the army but then the army needs to know in which war they are in and where they should go“(Rector E)

One of the rectors talked about how meaningful it is to be able to see things from others' perspective and that it is very important not to get upset if people don't agree with you.

Four of the rectors said that an academic leader has to possess good communication skills. He or she should be both a good talker and a good listener. One mentioned that the academic leader needs to be able to speak to people in private conversation, in small groups and in larger groups. He also needs good judgment. The academic leader needs to be very talented in working with people and getting people to work towards mutual goals. He needs to have the ability to build consensus, resolve conflicts and the ability to activate the independence and creativity of staff and students. The academic leader also needs to be able to make decisions.

"The quality to make unpopular decisions and follow them through"(Rector F)

Four rectors said that an academic leader has to have insight into the work that goes on inside the university. That is being familiar with how things are done around an organization e.g., to know what teaching and conducting research in university means. This knowledge would come from working at a university, teaching, and having a full education, with a Ph.D. However:

"It cannot be taken for granted that someone who has qualification as a professor is therefore qualified as a rector, it is not like that. So qualification as a professor or as a docent like the law states today is a minimum qualification but not sufficient in my opinion" (Rector A)

Innovation is very important in the work of the academic leader

"I think all experience in innovation is very important and will grow more important in the future"(Rector A)

2. Results for the second question: *"What management style do you think suits universities the best?"*

"Open management where information is out in the open and voices of everyone that works at the university is heard. Nevertheless, it has to be clear and certain management where goals are set and the aim is to develop and change the university for the better"(Rector D)

One of the rectors said he didn't have any opinion of the management model other than what is talked about in the laws. Another one talked about being leading but also persistent

"If you are a part of a framework like a university then they are full of kings and queens and sometimes you can't just be leading or it can be very complicated to get people on board and sometimes you just need to be firm but that should be as seldom as possible" (Rector C)

Inside the university:

“You have to realize that you are working with invariably very well-informed people all day and you don’t tell them some nonsense and it is very important to have this frank discussion/dialogue and have a close consultation. Not to deviate from liability but to be sure you have heard all points of view and all perspectives before you make decisions and that people know what those decisions are and what the aim is so transparency in management I think is vitally important. This is about everyone feeling that they are participants in the changing priorities and new strategy. This happens through this hierarchy and it is our duty as senior managers to ensure that the system works so that everybody can somehow get their views across”(Rector G)

3. Results for the third question: *“What do you think is the best way to get people to commit to you and your vision?”*

When asked about the best way to get people to commit to them, five of the rectors talked about how important it is to have a good flow of information. To get people on board with you, you need to let them know where you are going. They all talked about the importance of meetings, both formal meetings and informal.

“Two words, communication and conversation. On one hand communication, as in communicating and be sure to letting people know the vision. On the other hand conversation, to give people the opportunity to provide comments regarding the vision and have a chance to talk about it, ask questions that are connected to the vision as it is laid“ (Rector A)

Two of the rectors said „ my door is always open“ and that anybody could come at any time and talk to them about anything, They thought that was very important so people would feel they could come to them for anything.

“The most important thing is talking openly and honestly about challenges, opportunities and performance“(Rector D)

Three of the rectors said that it was very meaningful that everybody that is a part of the organization can be a part of the strategic planning process. Everybody can get their points across and have their opinion heard. The key is to have people participating so they feel like they are a part of the vision. People are more likely to work with the leader towards a goal they feel they are a part of.

“It is our duty as managers to ensure that the system works so that everybody can get their opinion across and it gets in to the administration“(Rector G)

Everyone should be a part of the strategic planning process:

“It is important that people get the opportunity to have an impact on the strategic planning process but at the same time it is always a challenge to keep the direction because if everybody in a big organization gets to have an impact then there is a risk that it gets too diluted“(Rector B)

One of the rectors talked about how essential it is to create an understanding for changes and that it is crucial that people get the information why changes happen or need to happen. When asked about what he thought was the best way to get people to commit:

“That employees can enjoy academic freedom and academic responsibilities in an organization that can offer competitive environment in salaries, support and creative scientific community“(Rector F)

4. Results for the fourth question: *“How do you think an individual that takes over as a new manager/rector should act?”*

Four of the rectors talked about getting to know the organization, the people and what goes on inside the university as soon as possible. This can be done by interviewing the employees, going to all levels and meeting people and hear what they are saying about the organization and how they feel about things and talking to the students as well. Talk to people on all levels, one of them said is especially important to get to know the key personnel, know their roles and what they contribute to the organization. Another one said it is essential to go and talk to people in their own environment and learn about the different needs of people that are inevitable in a big and complex organization like universities. Also although there are big meetings, it is important to talk to people in smaller groups as well.

“...So this should be to listen, to propose and implement”(Rector A)

One of the rectors said that the academic leader needs to set a strategy for the future, this strategy needs to hold a vision that is clear enough so that decisions can be made based on that vision.

“This may involve changes in structure and key employees. Strong leader should take the necessary time to determine the strategy and make the needed changes. The leader should not jump to fast nor hesitate when faced with decisions”(Rector D)

“...this is about turning on the light. Having a good vision on how to go forward. Create faith and that people believe in themselves and the future...there are always four fundamental questions that we need to affirmative/answer with a yes: Do we have a vision, do we have a plan, do we believe in the project and do we have the ability to implement it?” (Rector E)

“It is about stimulating peoples’ understanding of what a university is and what is expected from the employees in such an organisation. That everybody knows their obligations” (Rector F)

One of the rectors talked about how different it is when a new manager takes over a company compared to taking on the role of managing a university

“A new manager that comes into a company can come in with a lot of energy and restructure the company according to his vision in co-operation with the company’s Board. Therefore he can clearly state his goals and start working on them immediately, hiring and firing people, closing departments and opening new ones etc. That the rector cannot do no matter if it is a public school or private or in whatever form the organisation is. Educational institutions,

universities especially are very conservative in nature because every change affects benefits of the students over the short and long term and it takes a long time building up expertise. that is to say among employees and that's why you don't want any big changes"(Rector A)

5. Results for the fifth question: "*What did you do when you started as the rector, how did you introduce yourself and your vision?*"

Four of the rectors said that they had begun by meeting and listening to the employees by having meetings and interviewing them. They tried to listen to all the employees collectively through staff meetings at all levels. They then worked through the information and ideas that was gathered and analyzed it. Two of them then introduced their vision and view of universities in general. One of the rector said he tries to stay in touch with the people by sending e-mails to employees, holding staff meetings and personal conversations. Another one talked about that he had worked hard to improve the dissemination of all information regarding the school. Two other rectors said that it was important to meet people in their environment and talk to people in an informal matter/setting as well.

"I believe that it is very important to communicate immediately with simple and positive messages"(Rector E)

6. Results for the sixth question: "*Do you think that it could be helpful to work with a predefined/defined leadership model when new management/academic leader takes over? If so, how would you think it should be?*"

When asked if a predefined leadership model could help when getting into a new leadership role, three of the rectors said "Yes." One of them said he thought it would be very good to use a model. He had used his knowledge about management that he gained through reading and attending courses through the years, when he was thinking about what methodology approach he should use. But he didn't have any model to put his action in a particular process or goals at a specific time. He thought a model such as this one would have helped a lot in organizing the work that needed to be done. One of the rectors talked about how useful some kind of model could be as guidance for how to handle the role of an academic leader.

"It is very helpful for managers to take over a structure that works so that he can focus on getting to know the operation, develop and implement the vision. But to structured model or a plan that is too long-term can limit the manager in his role which is to develop the university"(Rector D)

Another one said:

"When I look at this leadership model that you put up here I think it would most definitely be helpful even if only as a guiding force and I think it would be worth it to put some work into making a good leadership model for universities....I would have appreciated something like that because you are really just working on intuition and of course things you know from elsewhere and you try to read about management. However, I think the model would help, especially when you have a model that is relatively wide and open like this one you can

introduce it to others and it improves the management throughout all layers of the institute”  
(Rector G)

Two of the rectors said they thought that a model such as the one shown to them in this interview could probably be helpful.

One of them said he thought it important to sense peoples’ strengths and weaknesses. That matters for the rector so he can make the right decisions on where to put the most emphasis and also to try to stimulate people to contribute when needed. It is of most importance not only to have people around you who always say yes, people should know they are most welcome to have their own opinions and should discuss them and ask questions.

In their answers, two of the rectors outlined what they thought such a model should be like:

“A simple model that includes certain steps and a simple model that contains specific steps but each step is connected to various existing management methods with explanations on how they can be used in university environment. I’ve found it useful to use these books as they show that many of the challenges, which we encounter, are known in other universities. Therefore I can see the value in such a model, which doesn’t show the one and only solution but rather demonstrates steps to take to achieve certain goals with connections to general change management methods”(Rector A)

“What would be most useful in such a model, would be creating guidance around the key factors of transformation of a new leader like meetings with employees, information about finances and the professional factors of the job, framework around timings of decisions and planning etc. The idea behind such a model should be to make it easier for a new leader to take over the control of the organisation rather than steering how the leader works”(Rector D)

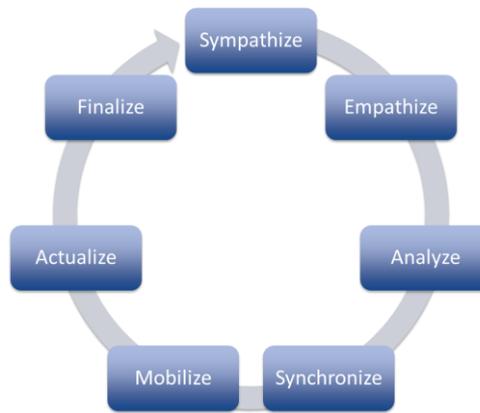
One of the rectors said he did not believe in theoretical management models but said:

“However organizational chart needs to be very clear and everyone needs to know what their role and authority is and what is expected from them“(Rector F)

The same rector said:

“Would you raise your children by using a theoretical upbringing model? The Swedish pedagogue Alva Myrdal did, her son writer January Myrdal has rated that method. As a parent, I would not want the testimony he gave his parents” (Rector F)

7. Results for the seventh question: *“If you look at the following picture [picture shown] of a leadership model that has been built to lead change in organizations. When you see these words, what do you think? Could they belong in your approach on the management/leadership process?”*



When showed the seven steps of *The Oroboros Change leadership Model* and asked about what they thought and if it was connected to the way they saw the leading process. Six out of all seven rectors were positive about the model and thought it made sense:

Some comments that were made about the model were:

“These words could definitely describe the way I see the process. Analyze, synchronize, mobilize, actualize and finalize are in my mind and my take key factors in change management and development...The other two words sympathize and empathize are more value loaded and not as easy to affiliate directly to management approach. But one way is to look at these words in the context of understanding employees, the operation and what drives people in making the workplace better and that is definitely a key factor in my take on management“ (Rector D)

“What I noticed first were the first two words, sympathize and empathize. That is what would rather call getting to know the operation. I don’t think that „sympathy “captures that ...I don’t know what other words I would use but I stumbled on these words before „analyzes“ and I don’t think sympathize is right. [...] Everything that comes next I think is logical, analyze, synchronize and then getting the things going and looking for an outcome. That is very good. I think that this is a very logical procedure for strategic planning and getting things started“ (Rector B)

“I haven’t thought about this as “sympathy.” I would have used “ambition for the school” and then “analyse.” I would skip “empathize” ...those aren’t the words I would use but when I look at this now I could. I could use empathize instead of ambition because what we care about is naturally the work and quality of the school“ (Rector C)

One of the rectors commented on how he thought that „follow up“ should be added to the model.

“...whether it should be part of the circle or not it is very important to have a scale to assess how it is going after „finalizing“...I think it is crucial to have something that monitors how this has been going otherwise there is a risk that it will not be remembered“ (Rector B)

One of the rectors had said that he did not believe in theoretical management models and answered question seven:

“When you are dancing, you can’t think about your every move individually distinct from one another. You need to give yourself over to the power of the dance and let the feeling carry

you. Either you have it in you or you don't. However it is a different matter that scholars like you [the researcher] can try to understand what characterizes successful managers and those who are not successful. In order to encourage understanding we practice scholarship and science" (Rector F)

## 5. DISCUSSION

The structure of the discussion chapter will be built up around the research questions.

1. *Is it possible to provide academic leaders with a tool or a method that helps guarantee their success in socializing within their university and to be better able to implement their vision?*

It is possible to provide academic leaders with such a tool that helps them to implement their vision and getting people to follow it. When taking over the role as a rector or academic leader there are many things to consider. The new leader needs to oversee all financial and managerial factors as well as all the "human" factors that build up the university. He needs to act decisively and systematically in getting to know the organisation and all the fundamental qualities of such a big organisation and that's why it would be helpful to know what steps to take and when. It is easy to get off track when there are a lot of things that have to be done. This tool needs to be very well defined and it needs to be suitable for leading and guiding in an academic environment like universities. By using the Oroboris Change Leadership Model the leader gets an overview of what he has already done and what he should do next. Good leader doesn't let the model control him but uses it as guidance.

2. *Is academic leadership different then leadership in other context?*

Leadership in every context is delicate and can be challenging. Leadership is about setting the direction, which is necessary in all organisations. The academic environment is no different. There has to be a vision and people working towards that vision. The leader's role is to get people on board and that is the same in all contexts. Universities are built up by diverse institutions and inside all these institutions there are groups of very diverse specialists that all know best and tend to be hesitant to authority, some of them may even be specialists in leadership skills or management. This diversity makes the leadership role difficult because it is challenging to get people to follow the same vision if their values and beliefs are different. However there are always challenges in leadership because we are dealing with human beings that have different emotions, motivations, values and beliefs. The human factor always makes things more complicated inside an organization and that's why leadership is so important. So the answer to the question is maybe not a clear-cut "yes or no". Because all organizations have their unique traits and universities are no different. Good leadership is needed in all context. There is no difference between academic leadership or other leadership.

*3. Is managing/leading universities different than managing/leading other organisations?*

One of the factors that makes managing/leading universities different from other organizations is a regulatory environment. In Iceland there are laws about public universities that they need to work by. Most other organizations also have some regulation but they are not always as extensive as in the case of universities. When a new management takes over a company it is relatively easy to do what has to be done to implement the new vision for the company by hiring or firing people and closing or opening new departments whatever suits the manager's vision and strategy. That is not the case for the universities. It is difficult, especially in a small community like Iceland to build up expertise and therefore it is not easy to fire teachers and hire new ones. Like other organizations, universities have clients, the clients for a university are the students and every change that is made can affect the quality of the education that the students seek. However, quality of the "product" and the actual profit may not be as well defined as in other organizations and that of course makes managing complicated.

The main difference between universities and other organizations lies in the size, complexity and diversity of organizations. Universities are often big organizations; they are very complex and diverse which complicates things. However, there are other organizations that are also big, complex and diverse e.g., hospitals. These organizations would probably face similar difficulties of leadership and management as universities. So this model is not exclusively for universities and academic leaders but could be used with great success in all professional contexts.

After answering the research questions, there are several interesting follow-on possibilities. It would be interesting to look deeper into the roles of academic leaders and evaluate where the difference of the roles lies. It would also be interesting to look at the different leading styles in Icelandic universities and how the different rectors have influenced their institutions.

The conduct of this research was fascinating. The rectors are very interesting persons and it was rewarding and fun to talk to them, hear their views about management, leadership and the universities in general. When reviewing the questions which the rectors were asked to answer, it is possible that adding a couple of questions would have added to the clarity of the results, e.g. questions about the difference between academic leadership and leadership in other contexts and about the difference in managing/leading universities and other organisations. The answers to the research questions were subtler in the answers to the overall questions.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

Leadership is very important in all organisations. When leading a big organisation, there are a lot of things to consider, it is easy to fall off the track. That is why a leadership model is very useful. There are many things for a new rector, to consider when setting strategy and

vision for the organization. Therefore the Oroboris Change Leadership Model is very useful to keep continual perspective. Using the model as a guide to the steps that are needed to be a successful leader, is therefore very valuable.

In the end there may not be a significant difference between academic leadership and leadership in other contexts, because it all comes down to how to get people on board with the leader and get them to follow the vision the leader has set. That is the same in all contexts. However universities are full of experts who "Know Best" and are often not very willing to be led which can make things more challenging for the academic leader.

The same can be said about managing/leading universities compared to other organisations, i.e. it may not be so different when it comes down to it however the size, complexity and diversity of a university makes it complicated to manage/lead. Although I would add that the same can be said about many other organizations as well.

Therefore my conclusion is that The Oroboros Leadership Model could be used very successfully in helping leaders gain and sustain influence inside any organisation.

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