

Original Article

Internal University Leading Function in Promoting Knowledge Economy in Tanzania

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In response to the evolving demands of the knowledge economy (KE), Tanzanian universities are transforming their internal management practices to enhance effectiveness, competitiveness, and relevance. The study focuses on how universities manage activities that support knowledge creation, dissemination, and innovation. Data from 30 university leaders, gathered through document reviews and interviews, were thematically analysed. Findings reveal that leading include dynamism, empowerment, vision, and transparency motivate researchers to produce impactful academic research work with commercialization potential. However, the heavy reliance on institutional policies pushing rapid publication for promotion results in rushed, low-quality studies. The study emphasizes the need for leadership that goes beyond policy enforcement, fostering research with commercial value by leveraging personal leading qualities and providing adequate resources like grants and training.

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INTRODUCTION

Universities play a pivotal role in fostering knowledge economies by producing and disseminating knowledge that drives innovation and economic development. In Tanzania, the importance of universities in supporting the transition towards a

knowledge-based economy is growing as rapid changes in the global economy and business environments demand that organizations reassess their resources and capabilities to remain competitive (OECD, 2003; Laal, 2010). The concept of human capital, introduced by economists Gary

Becker and Theodore Schultz in the 1960s, underscores the value of education, skills, and experience in enhancing productivity and fostering economic growth (Chen, 2021; Ross, 2021). This evolved into the knowledge economy framework, where higher education institutions (HEIs) are key in driving innovation, generating intellectual capital, and creating a highly skilled workforce (Hadad, 2017; Choong & Leung, 2021). This shift towards prioritizing knowledge exchange (KE) has led universities to reorganize governance structures, enhance internal capabilities, and implement quality assurance mechanisms (Jessop, 2017).

Knowledge Creation in the Universities for the Knowledge Economy is generated in diverse forms across academic and administrative processes, including documents, procedures, and tacit knowledge rooted in individual experiences and perceptions. This knowledge creation occurs at multiple levels through activities such as research, assessment, and consultancy. However, many organizations struggle to fully leverage their organizational knowledge due to its intangible nature (Stankosky, 2005; Stewart, 2001). This highlights the importance of recognizing and quantifying knowledge assets within higher education institutions.

Universities, as key players in the knowledge economy, must prioritize initiatives that enhance economic productivity and address global challenges. Universities are urged to focus their research and innovation efforts on creating scientific and social value to drive economic growth (Juma et al., 2001; Puukka & Marmolejo, 2008). University academic leaders are critical in promoting knowledge economy initiatives, fostering innovation, and contributing to both economic and social development.

Governments worldwide recognize the pivotal role of higher education in promoting economic growth. Educational institutions serve multiple functions within a knowledge economy, including training the workforce and generating new knowledge through research (Farazmand, 2018). Countries like Finland and the United States have made significant strides in integrating knowledge economy practices into their higher education systems, establishing

networks of research institutions and industry collaborations (Poutanen, 2022; Farazmand, 2018). The global emphasis on the knowledge economy has heightened awareness of the need for educational institutions to foster entrepreneurial skills and innovation. However, developing countries like Tanzania face unique challenges, including limited research funding, inadequate infrastructure, and cultural barriers. Nevertheless, Tanzania recognizes the necessity of adapting to the knowledge economy to drive sustainable development and improve educational quality (URT National Research and Development Policy, 2010).

Tanzania's policy documents emphasize promoting inventions, innovations, and traditional knowledge from various sources, including academia and grassroots efforts. The country seeks to integrate research and development (R&D) policies into its National Development Vision, which aspires to build a competitive knowledge economy driven by skills and innovation (FYDP III 2021/22-2025/2026; Vision 2025). The government promotes innovation through flexible legal frameworks and financing strategies for tech start-ups, recognizing universities as catalysts for enhancing competitiveness and productivity across sectors (URT Higher Education Report, 2022).

The examination of higher education institutions' contributions to the information economy reveals significant gaps in understanding internal processes critical for aligning with knowledge economy initiatives. Scholars such as Moiseev, V., Karelina, M., Komarova, O., & Karelina, E. (2019), and Marginson (2009) have extensively examined higher education institutions' contributions to the information economy. Cultural and organizational shifts are necessary for universities to adopt innovative practices and leverage intellectual capital effectively. This transition is essential for fostering research that contributes to local and global transformations. Despite insights into higher education's contributions to the knowledge economy (Moiseev et al., 2019; Marginson, 2009; Finegold, 2006), gaps remain in understanding how Tanzanian institutions contribute to the knowledge economy. As the global landscape evolves, understanding best practices, challenges, and opportunities in integrating the knowledge economy

within Tanzanian universities is vital for fostering economic growth and innovation. This study aims to explore how dynamic, empowerment-oriented, collaborative, adaptable, and positional leading management functions enable universities to better respond to the demands of a knowledge-based economy through frameworks such as knowledge sharing, innovation, research productivity, cross-disciplinary initiatives, and commercialization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Systems Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory

Systems Theory offers a valuable framework for understanding the complex interplay between internal university leadership, management functions, and the promotion of the knowledge economy. It emphasizes that organizations are interconnected systems composed of various components that interact with one another. In the context of universities, this means recognizing that leadership functions—such as strategic planning, resource allocation, and communication—are not isolated activities but rather part of a larger system (Taborga, 2011).

Transformational leaders focus on generating new ideas and perspectives to drive the organization toward progress and success (Nuel, et al, 2021). The integration of Systems Theory with Transformational Leadership Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how internal university leadership and management functions can promote the knowledge economy in Tanzania. By recognizing the interconnectedness of various components, emphasizing feedback loops, and fostering adaptability, university leaders can create an environment that supports knowledge creation, innovation, and collaboration. (Gui et al, 2022; Manu, 2022)

Empirical Review

In addressing this objective, several empirical studies have explored the pivotal role of leading universities in fostering the growth of the knowledge budget. A notable investigation by Shumaila (2022) delved into the influence of the knowledge economy

on Asian business. Employing qualitative methods for data collection, the study utilized Knowledge Economy (KE) indicators as independent variables. The expectation was that these independent variables would exhibit correlations either among themselves or with the component variables. The study encompassed all Asian countries, with Lebanon, Japan, and Turkmenistan being excluded from the sample due to data unavailability. The dataset spanned from 2000 to 2019, sourced from the World Bank indicators (WDI), focusing on variables such as education, ICT, economic encouragement, invention, institutional regime, and GDP growth. The findings of the study revealed that education and ICT contributed to a reduction in the time and cost associated with starting a business. Economic incentives played a dual role by decreasing the cost of business initiation while simultaneously increasing business density and the overall number of businesses. Additionally, innovation emerged as a factor positively associated with an increased number of businesses and business density. The study also highlighted that the institutional regime had a mitigating effect on the likelihood of business closure, whereas GDP growth demonstrated a significant negative relationship with business closures.

Gui et al. (2022) study explored how transformational leadership (TL) influences both radical and incremental innovation, with knowledge sharing (KS) behaviors acting as mediators. It also examines how a knowledge-centered culture (KCC) moderates the relationship between TL, KS behaviors, and innovation capabilities. Using a questionnaire survey and Structural Equation Modeling with data from 321 participants in 85 service and manufacturing firms, the findings showed that KS behaviors significantly mediate the link between TL and innovation. It was specifically found out that, knowledge collecting has a stronger effect on incremental innovation, while knowledge donating plays a greater role in radical innovation. Moreover, KCC enhances the impact of TL on KS activities and innovation underscoring the role of leadership and culture in the knowledge economy, where success depends on the effective use of knowledge to innovate and adapt.

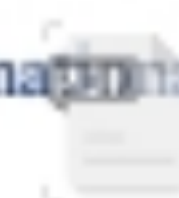
Again, study conducted by Tchamyu (2016) on the role of Information Economy in Africa, the research evaluated the impact of knowledge economy (KE) on business across 53 African countries during the period 1996-2010. The study utilized the four components of KE from the World Bank, including education, innovation, economic incentives & institutional regime, and information and message technology. Business indicators were categorized into starting, doing, and ending business. Empirical strategies involved principal mechanisms analysis and panel instrumental variable fixed effect approaches. The study's recommendation emphasizes that, in alignment with common sense and economic theory predictions, implementing knowledge economy policies is likely to significantly enhance the initiation and conduct of business in Africa. This approach is deemed crucial in addressing unemployment challenges and enhancing Africa's affordability in world-wide value chains.

Furthermore, Bejinaru (2017) study conducted in Suceava, Romania, focusing on "Universities in the Knowledge Economy," utilized observations and documentary reviews, offering a conclusion that blends conceptual and pragmatic insights. The research centered on exploring the evolving roles of universities within the knowledge economy. The findings underscored that, from their inception, universities have served as scientific, cultural, and moral pillars for society, maintaining the mission of catalysing social and economic progress. While the traditional role involves educating students and contributing to global scientific knowledge, contemporary universities are assuming more diverse responsibilities, reflecting new dynamic capabilities. The study's recommendations highlight that, in the knowledge society, universities play a crucial role in making, processing, and transferring knowledge to society through various means. Knowledge, being the strategic resource, constitutes the spirit of the intellectual capital of universities, and organizational integrators play a vital role in efficiently translating this potential into operational outcomes. Among these integrators, academic leadership stands out as the most significant, influencing rational, emotional, and spiritual knowledge. The study advocates that universities, by

contributing to knowledge creation, can contribute to building a more democratic and equitable society. In such a society, the recognition of knowledge is not solely determined by competitiveness, performance, and productivity, but rather by an enhancement in the quality of life and work for communities and citizens. This necessitates a continuous focus on emerging societal aspirations.

Moreover, according to Okebula (2019) presented to Botswana University on "The Role of Higher Education in Building a Knowledge-Driven Budget," the research defines a knowledge-driven economy as one where technology and information play crucial roles in economic activity and sustainable growth. Traditionally, many nations relied on conventional resources like labor and capital for wealth creation and economic development. However, due to globalization, evolving trends, and technological progress, there has been a gradual shift towards knowledge-based economies. The study utilized a mixed methodology, incorporating documentary reviews and literature analysis from various studies, to gain a complete understanding of the knowledge economy. The study's recommendations emphasize the importance of African governments, including the government of Botswana, prioritizing enhanced resources for higher education to fully leverage its capability as a driver of knowledge-based economies. This entails aligning education outputs with future occupation needs to address issues of quality, relevance, access, equity, and accountability across the entire education sector. The lecture presented to the University's Council and Management underscores the importance of continually producing high-quality and entrepreneurial graduates to contribute effectively to the knowledge economy of Botswana and Africa.

Leadership relates with organization need to change therefore new leadership styles are required. According to Shattock (2009) Intellectual and visionary leadership is required: first, to eliminate ideological impediments connected with the business paradigm and the university concept; and second, to carry this out in the context of the institution's current culture, mission, and strategy. Moyo and McKenna (2021) portray that the overly bureaucratic administrative systems were reported in



much of the data as a major constraint on the use of funding. Institutions with weak administrative systems were severely constrained in the application of knowledge economy programs. The failure of universities to utilize funds and to submit project plans and annual review developments on time proposes an institutional ethos. In such cases, universities had no clear difference in the roles of the governing body (Council) and leadership and organization led by the Vice-Chancellor and Senate.

Kahangwa (2017) spots the need for good leadership in universities for academics to develop marketing skills so that investigation can be fully utilized. He identifies the need to put together academic, commercial and neo-liberal dissertations (competition, marketing, research and the private sector). Through these discourses, it portrays what is perceived to be the current state as well as the kind of interactions that universities need to have with the public and private sector following the introduction of Knowledge Based Economy (KBE) ideas in higher education. For instance, one of the ways of disseminating research results outlined in UDSM Research Policy and Operation Procedures is producing a 'good brochure to market the university's research activities. This style is similar to what was observed by Bertelsen (1998) in South Africa, namely, that the advertising of higher education is accelerated by university administrators through their adoption of a corporate management style and employment of the language and logic of commercial to redefine priorities and reshape procedures in the universities, under the influence of neo-liberalism. On the other hand, Leibowitz et al. (2015) indicate that strong leadership that contributes to cultures of professionalism is needed for coaching and learning.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative approach rooted in social constructivism, utilizing a multi-case study design to examine internal university management's promotion of the knowledge economy at the University of Dar es Salaam and the University of Dodoma. Data was collected from 30 purposively selected participants, including Deans, Heads of Departments, Coordinators, and Directors of Research and Publications. Purposive sampling

targeted key informants in managerial roles involved in knowledge economy practices, while snowball and convenience sampling were also used to access relevant participants. The qualitative approach enabled an in-depth exploration of managerial processes such as planning, organizing, leading, and controlling to promote knowledge economy initiatives. The study aimed to achieve data saturation by capturing diverse perspectives across faculties and departments, ensuring rich and meaningful insights into knowledge economy practices.

The study used two qualitative data collection methods: document review and semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with 26 respondents in universities and 4 by phone, focusing on how managerial practices. Face-to-face interviews allowed for deeper insights, flexibility in questioning, and rapport-building, with conversations in English and Kiswahili. Scheduling challenges and participant hesitations were managed through explanation and rescheduling. Documentary review included university policies, strategic plans, and handbooks, helping assess how KE practices are integrated. Thematic analysis was applied, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. Initial familiarization with the data involved reading, coding, and organizing themes. Both inductive and deductive coding approaches were used, integrating Henri Fayol's Administrative Management Theory. Codes like "strategic role" and "supportive role" were linked to the broader theme of organizing KE initiatives. Themes were refined through an iterative process, ensuring coherence.

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Results revealed that visionary leading, building strategic Relationships, Empowering individual and group innovativeness, adaptive dynamic (personal initiatives /personality) and positional leading (from the office or position) displayed the strongest role of how leading support KE initiatives in universities as described in the following sub sections:

Visionary Leading

The findings indicate that managers within Tanzanian universities exhibit a forward-thinking

approach, recognizing the need to transcend traditional boundaries in research and academia. This forward-looking perspective is crucial in aligning strategic plans with the evolving landscape of the knowledge budget. Leaders understand the importance of setting long-term goals that drive research and academic endeavors towards impactful outcomes. Findings indicated that leading indicates that leaders within the university context embrace a forward-thinking perspective especially the senior managers who are directly involved in the strategic plans of the university. As respondents commented that:

"...because of the nature of today's world requires even us academic leaders to think beyond in terms of where we want our research to go. Our strategic plans are designed not only to address current challenges but also to anticipate future trends and opportunities in research, the university has also established entrepreneurial and innovation centre" (SM#1).

"I would like to think that it is through strategic initiative by our leaders that my college is benefiting from the partnerships we have established and for instance, we were able to acquire the additional of buildings in our college" (SM#7).

Further evidence as indicated in one of the university documents, the Fourth University Rolling Strategic Plan (2021/22–2025/26), state that 72 academic staff members attended training on Strategic Academic Leadership and Management, reflecting the institution's commitment to building leadership capacity. Also, another statement of the university vision document, stated "it will be underlined by such distinguishing characteristics as visionary leadership (university vision statement, 2012). This proactive leading is crucial for positioning the university at the forefront of the knowledge economy.

Findings indicated that leading which is visionary supports relationship-building with external partners which is important element in fostering knowledge economy initiatives within universities. Additionally, the university managers recognized the necessity of leaders being aggressive in establishing strong connections with various

investors, including industry partners, management agencies, and other academic institutions. These relationships not only facilitate funding opportunities but also enable knowledge exchange and resource sharing, ultimately enriching the university's research and innovation endeavors. As one senior manager noted,

"University managers actively seek out and build partnerships with key players in the industry and government sectors that will benefit the university even in future. These relationships are built on the vision and goals of the university" (SM#2).

Another respondent emphasized the importance of visionary leading and establishing external collaborations, stating, "Our leadership ability to envision beyond the present times enables the university to build strong and meaning relation with the external partners which involves negotiating and 'kuleta hoja amabazo wataalam wa nje watazipokea na kujenga mahusioano na chuo' (produce proposals that will attract and enable the outside expert to accept and build relationship with the university)" (SM#1).

This kind of leading will enable universities to innovate and conduct cutting-edge research that is significantly enhanced by partnerships through gaining access to new ideas, technologies, and funding sources. This illustrate the critical role that visionary and proactive leadership plays in fostering a thriving knowledge economy within universities. By prioritizing and cultivating external relationships, university leaders can secure the necessary resources and support to drive forward their research and academic missions.

Leading through Empowering

Findings revealed that leadership that is empowering enable individuals and groups to unleash their creative potential and innovation capabilities. Academic leaders emphasize the importance of encouraging staff to explore research areas of their interest, fostering a culture of autonomy and exploration. The findings suggested that university leaders can empower staff by creating an environment that encourages academic freedom and exploration. As one respondent noted, "I have

realized when academic researchers are given the freedom to pursue their own research interests, it boosts their motivation and leads to unexpected and innovative outcomes" (MM#4). This sense of autonomy is crucial for fostering a vigorous research culture where new ideas can flourish.

Empowering leaders also recognize the importance of providing financial resources to support research initiatives. One senior manager stated, *"Our ability to innovate is directly tied to the availability of funds. By securing and allocating resources specifically for innovative projects, we can significantly enhance our research output, for instance in our university anyone who publishes in a peer-reviewed journal is awarded 1,000,000TZs this motivates staff to research and publish more"* (SM#2). Financial support is essential for translating creative ideas into tangible research outcomes.

This is also linked to rewarding and recognizing the efforts of academic researchers. Recognition empowers academic researchers since it acts as an incentive and a benchmark for other staff members to be encouraged to move towards innovation. As one participant reiterated: *"We acknowledge our staff achievement of research and innovation activities through awards and promotions during meeting, by announcing in our unit websites and even WhatsApp group"* (SM#4). This shows that recognition and reward do not motivate the staff but also sets a standard for excellence and innovation within the institution. This indicated that university leaders should strengthen awards and recognition that are associated with innovation and research that have a direct impact in the society. By awarding the application of research to the societal relevance and practical applications it can validate the tangible benefits of investing in university innovations. This helps to build trust with stakeholders, raises awareness about the importance of research funding and encourage to stimulate academic researchers to conduct more valuable research that benefits the broader society.

Additionally, several participants MM#8, LM#4, LM#6, LM#2 highlighted the importance of open communication and feedback in encouraging knowledge sharing among academic researchers. They emphasized that when staff feel heard and

valued, they are more likely to be free to share their ideas, expertise, and experiences with others without feeling judged. For instance, one respondent stated: *"One of the things that I have tried to do is create a culture of open communication especially during meetings, departmental research seminars this is to encourage members to speak up, to share their ideas, concerns, and even critiques"* (MM#8).

This environment of openness encourages academics to discuss their work and explore potential collaboration with others and also, they are more confident to participate in discussion and share their innate knowledge with others. As another participant echoed the following statement:

"As managers in an academic institution we want academic staff to disagree with each other, but constructively of course this is how you produce quality and substantial research through encouraging openness. That is how we grow as individual researchers and as a team." (LM#4).

Additionally, transparency in communication was mentioned as a leading strategy that builds trust among staff members, and essential for effective collaboration. One participant from the low-level management mentioned, *"When the central administration leadership of the university is transparent about decisions and policies, it builds trust and encourages us at the lower level to be more open in sharing our views and concerns on policies related to research"* (LM#6). *Feedback was also seen as a crucial component for the academic researchers to feel empowered. Participants emphasized that regular feedback helps staff feel appreciated, and motivated to contribute to knowledge sharing and is crucial for the continuous improvement of research activities. A respondent stated, "when staff members receive feedback promptly on issues regarding issues such permission to attend conferences, approved funding on their research proposals and ongoing projects it really encourages them"* (LM#4). This shows that feedback from management provides valuable insights that can improve the quality and relevance of research, it is also important for maintaining high morale and fostering innovation among academic researchers.

However, the findings also indicated that leaders experience challenges in this empowerment leading. One manager stated, *"I have not been able to connect with my staff on one-on-one; I think this could have strengthened individuals to participate more in research this happens when the individual seeks me personally."* (MM#10). This highlights the difficulty in providing personalized, individualized support and mentorship for researchers, particularly those who may be struggling with personal or professional challenges. However, the findings also recognize the potential benefits of taking the time to understand individual's concerns and address them which can create a more productive and engaging research environment.

Adaptive Leading:

Effective leadership in promoting knowledge economy initiatives requires adaptability and dynamism. Leaders must be flexible in their communication strategies, accommodating diverse preferences and technological capabilities among staff. Embracing new technologies and responding to changing circumstances are essential for staying relevant and effective in driving knowledge economy initiatives forward. For instance, leaders recognized that staff members have different communication preferences and technological competencies. As one respondent stated;

"We have to understand that not everyone is comfortable with the same methods of communication. Some prefer emails, others face-to-face meetings, and some are more comfortable with other ways since there are staff of different age groups. For communication for example I tend to use emails, normal calls, wats app so to accommodate these differences to ensure everyone is informed" (MM#2).

By being mindful of these preferences, leaders can foster a more inclusive and collaborative environment.

Findings reflected that adaptive leading entails university leaders responding to changing circumstances. One respondent stated, *"The academic field is constantly evolving, we need to be competent to adapt quickly and effectively in reply to new challenges and opportunities especially in*

research and innovation, universities are now competing for funds, and leaders should seek out new knowledge and skills to stay relevant" (MM#8). This includes adapting to shifts in funding landscapes, regulatory changes, and emerging research trends. This indicate that for university leaders to remain effective, they need to continuously update their strategies and approaches in driving knowledge economy initiatives. This ongoing learning for leaders and adaptation are critical for sustaining long-term success and can be attained through capacity building and training.

Findings also indicate that flexibility and adaptability entail leaders also embracing informal settings that enable building strong relationships with the staff, but also for driving innovation and growth in the university. Knowledge economy, involves accessing information and ideas, being open to new perspectives, approaches, and ideas is critical. It allows leaders to be more approachable, relatable to their staff which are essential for building trust and fostering open communication. As a respondent commented,

"I do not fix myself to traditional, formal settings like formal scheduled meetings or scheduled appointments to have talks or share ideas with staff. But i also seek out informal opportunities to connect with my department staff members, whether it's during a casual lunch break, a walk around the office corridors, or even a quick chat. By doing so, I am able to stay connected with my staff on a personal level" (MM#9).

This kind of flexibility in leading enables the leader to create a safe environment for the academic staff can where they feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, ideas, and concerns and such environment encourages collaboration, creativity, and knowledge sharing among members. These informal conversations often lead to breakthroughs and new insights that might not have emerged in a traditional meeting setting. By embracing this kind of flexibility, the leaders are able to tap into the collective knowledge and expertise of academic researchers and drive innovation.

However, findings highlighted challenges related to adapting to new technologies. One leader

mentioned, *"I am not very conversant with the technology and the systems, but I have appointed someone competent to help me with these issues. Nowadays, most tasks, including approving staff requests, are computerized and done online."*(MM#5). This illustrates the challenge of technological adaptation that university leaders face. As universities increasingly rely on digital platforms for administrative and academic processes, leaders must ensure they can navigate these systems effectively. Recognizing their limitations, some leaders delegate technological tasks to more competent individuals to maintain efficiency and effectiveness in their roles. This approach not only highlights the importance of technological competence in leading KE initiatives.

Collaborative Leading

In the context of promoting knowledge economy initiatives within universities, findings show that collaborative leading plays an important role. This leading emphasizes partnership, teamwork, collegial work, delegating, and the collective pursuit of shared goals, which are crucial for fostering innovation and driving academic and research excellence. As Respondents stated the following:

"I work collegially with my team, often delegating the office tasks. For instance, when I am not around, I delegate someone to the office, and it can be any staff member who is available and capable." (MM#2)

"When we work together as a team, we can produce something much better than we could on our own, when for instance organizing events or conferences, I always involve various staff and even other departments and getting different opinions from people often generate more productive outcome" (MM#4)

Collaborative leading also promotes collaborative thinking, which can lead to innovative solutions to complex problems. As one respondent stated, *"I normally maintain open lines of communication across different departments, and with that I find it easy to collaborate with other head of departments in the unit, which enriches our department activities one being the research activities"*(MM#7). This shows that collective expertise and resources in

leading support KE initiatives by bringing diverse perspectives and expertise together, leading to more comprehensive and innovative findings. However, as much as collaborative leading is implemented within the units, findings indicated that collaborative leading should be enhanced to include collaboration beyond immediate units and extend it to other departments in different units of the university. Therefore, there is a need to push for more cross-departmental collaborations with other units. Cross-departmental collaboration leading can bring in new perspectives and expertise that might not have been there in a given unit. Leaders need to facilitate and encourage these broader collaborations.

Additionally, collaborative leading fosters intellectual stimulation and creativity among academic researchers in the university by creating an environment where diverse ideas and perspectives are valued, shared, and built upon. As one participant stated, *"During the seminar discussions and presentation at the department we normally do not have the same person chairing discussions we select different staff members regardless of whether they hold a PhD or a master and this might encourage one to be more critical and stimulate their thinking"* (MM#6). This practice encourages a broader range of perspectives, fostering a more critical and stimulating environment since everyone a chance to lead and contribute, which can really enhance academic staff critical thinking and engagement. This approach also democratizes the discussion process and helps in bringing out diverse viewpoints, making the research discussion sessions more enriching and intellectually stimulating.

Positional Leading:

Findings illustrated that leading by university managers utilizes formal authority to support knowledge economy initiatives by transactional means, including making decisions, policies, and setting time frames that facilitate the integration of knowledge economy practices within the university. This type of leading involves aligning promotion criteria with the university's goals, issuing directives to meet specific objectives, and ensuring compliance with established guidelines. Positional leadership provides structure and direction, guiding the university towards its objectives in the knowledge

economy landscape. To this, one respondent highlighted, *"Our university has issued that all faculty members are aware of the promotion criteria, which include among others research publications, books published"* (MM#8). Another participant reiterated, *"I don't have to push staff too hard to publish because the university's common guideline states that promotion is based on publications, and each staff member has to submit their publications through the OPRAS system."* (MM #2). This means that the university issue structured directives for faculty members to meet research and innovation goals and this alignment helps keep everyone focused on the university strategic goals.

Additionally, university documents specify detailed criteria for academic promotions based on scholarly output, including journal papers, books, and patented materials. These criteria show how transactional leading is implemented through formal policies that guide and assess the performance of academic staff. For example, Guidelines & Procedures for the Assessment of Academic Staff Performance, 2020 (U-GAASP, 2020) states; *"Journal papers from diversified sources should contribute at least 35% for promotion to Senior Lecturer/Senior Librarian, 40% for promotion to Associate Professor and 45% for promotion to Professor"*. The guidelines serve as a transactional tool where meeting the specified criteria results in rewards, such as promotions to higher academic ranks. For instance: *"Patented material in the relevant specialty registered by a duly recognized Patent Office will be considered for promotion to the ranks of Senior Lecturer and above, as long as the patent is reviewed and vetted by a respected senior academic in the relevant field/discipline."* This aligns with the positional leading through the means of transaction of using rewards (e.g. promotions) to motivate higher performance.

Furthermore, ensuring compliance with established university guidelines is a crucial aspect of transactional leading involving monitoring progress and provide feedback to academic researchers. *"When the situation necessitates for it for instance if a staff member does not deliver, I simply write a formal letter to the staff, setting a deadline for results. If there's a direct order from higher up, such as staff need to attend a seminar, I pass it along to*

them." (MM #4). Additionally, this leading through formal authority is evident in policy implementation. As one leader explained, *"We have set policies that require departments and units to report their progress on research related quarterly. This accountability ensures we are moving in the right direction."* (SM#3). Formal authority allows university managers to enforce these guidelines uniformly across the university and this can provide a stable and predictable environment for research and innovation.

Findings revealed that utilizing formal authority in a transactional manner is essential for supporting knowledge economy initiatives. This leadership ensures that decisions, policies, and time frames are effectively integrated into the university's operations, thereby aligning individual efforts of research and innovation activities with the institution's broader goals. On the other hand, focusing on leading through formal authority can have limitations. For example, it may not foster creativity or innovation, as academic researchers may feel constrained by strict guidelines and expectations.

DISCUSSION

The themes identified across the data, visionary leading, leading through empowering, adaptive leading, collaborative leading represents the key findings related to leadership in organizations within the context of knowledge economy. For example, findings from the study revealed that visionary leading within the university context is characterized by forward-thinking perspectives, particularly among senior managers directly involved in strategic planning. These findings align with the studies by Alzghoul et al. (2023) and Subiyakto et al. (2020), which demonstrated that strategic thinking among leaders promotes and increases employee creativity. Further they stated that leaders who promote the sharing, creation, and use of knowledge, enhance how effectively strategic thinking leads to creative outcomes among employees

The findings suggest that collaborative and empowering leadership fosters intellectual stimulation and creativity among university researchers by promoting collegial work and delegating responsibilities. When university leaders

encourage open discussions, collaboration, and the sharing of research ideas, they enhance critical thinking and innovation. This approach strengthens the link between strategic, long-term planning for innovative research programs and the creativity of academic staff, such as the development of new research ideas and commercially valuable products. This concept is supported by Alzghoul et al. (2023), who found that leaders promoting knowledge-sharing platforms and collaborative teams enable staff to think strategically and devise creative solutions. Similarly, Burhan and Khan (2024) demonstrated that empowering leadership positively impacts organizational innovation through the mediation of organizational identification and intellectual capital.

The findings also highlight the importance of adaptability and dynamism in university leadership for promoting knowledge economy (KE) initiatives. Leaders must be flexible in their communication strategies, embrace informal settings, and accommodate the diverse preferences and technological capabilities of staff. For example, adopting new technologies and adjusting to changing circumstances are critical for maintaining relevance and driving KE initiatives forward. This aligns with Walumbwa et al. (2011), who emphasize that leaders in the knowledge economy must foster positive relationships through transparency, accountability, and openness in information sharing. Effective leaders seek input from their teams and base decisions on objective analysis, especially when face-to-face interactions are limited. Despite these challenges, leaders must still communicate the organization's vision and unite their teams to achieve common goals, overcoming barriers like electronic communication and physical distance. Similarly, Elrehail et al. (2018) found that transformational leadership and knowledge sharing positively impact the innovation capabilities of higher education institutions, reinforcing the importance of dynamic leadership in fostering institutional growth and creativity.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the study highlights the critical role of dynamic and adaptable leadership in fostering knowledge creation, dissemination, and innovation

within Tanzanian universities. Leadership approaches such as visionary, empowering, adaptive, and collaborative leadership are key in promoting creativity and strategic thinking among academic staff. By embracing open communication, flexibility in leadership styles, and the integration of new technologies, university leaders can effectively align their institutions with the demands of the knowledge economy. This ensures that universities remain relevant, innovative, and capable of producing research with both academic and commercial value.

Moreover, the findings emphasize the need for leaders to go beyond institutional policies and leverage individual leadership qualities to inspire and motivate their teams. By fostering an environment that promotes knowledge sharing, teamwork, and innovation, leaders can enhance the overall research output and quality, ultimately contributing to economic growth and societal development. As the knowledge economy continues to evolve, the ability of universities to adapt and lead through these diverse leadership approaches will be crucial in shaping the future of higher education and its impact on the global stage.

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