



# **Women Leaders in Higher Education: Shattering the myths (Research into Higher Education)**

*Tanya Fitzgerald*

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Leadership in universities is physically, intellectually and emotionally demanding work. It involves multiple and complex tasks and responsibilities such as staff management, strategic management, operational planning, financial and resources management, policy development, quality assurance processes, improving student outcomes, and engaging with community and the professions/industry. Leadership is not simply the act of being a leader, it is the act of leadership that projects 'success' and 'desirable' attributes. Leadership has the capacity to be deeply seductive yet it is not an immediately attractive option for women, particularly for those who carry the burden of family and domestic responsibilities, for whom finding a space for leading is no easy task. Yet despite the almost pessimistic research evidence, women are in senior leadership positions in higher education, however precarious their numbers. There can be little doubt that universities benefit from diversity in their student and staff population. This book addresses the central questions; Who are the women who survive and occupy elite leadership roles in universities? How might their leadership be shaped by and a consequence of institutional climate? What strategies do they learn and adopt and how do they lead and manage their female colleagues? What about those women who do not 'fit' the gender script? The chapters overview the changing policy landscape in higher education; provide a critical commentary on the interplay between gender, leadership, higher education, and organisational diversity, and draw on education and critical management literatures in order to offer a broader understanding of gender and elite leadership;

This book will be essential reading for anyone involved or interested in higher education policy and management, academic leadership, organisational diversity and gender studies.

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