Strategic Leadership in the Business School

Business schools have come under fire in recent years, with criticisms centring on their academic rigour and the relevance of business education to the ‘real’ world of management. Alongside this ongoing debate, increasing international competition and media rankings have led to a fierce struggle between business schools for positioning and differentiation. These are among the challenges that are faced by the dean of the modern-day business school. In this book, Fernando Fragueiro and Howard Thomas show how deans of business schools can meet such challenges in terms of strategic direction setting and the execution of their leadership role. Drawing on their invaluable experience as deans of highly successful business schools, they present a series of case studies to show how leaders of five major business schools (IMD, LBS, INSEAD, IAE and Warwick) have built effective strategies in the context of internal and external political pressures.

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Strategic Leadership in the Business School
Keeping One Step Ahead

FERNANDO FRAGUEIRO
and
HOWARD THOMAS
To Lynne and the Thomas family, who are Howard's foundation and who light up Howard's life.

To Carlos Cavallé of IESE, the dean of deans, who has been an indispensable mentor to Fernando and a long-standing friend to both of us.
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Preface

This book is grounded in the research and writing of the two authors: on one side, the work Howard Thomas has undertaken over the past decade at Warwick Business School (WBS), the Association of Business Schools (ABS), the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) International, the Global Foundation for Management Education (GFME) and on business schools and their strategic leadership; on the other, Fernando Fragueiro’s five years of research on ‘strategic leadership as processes in a specific organizational context from a political perspective’ at three world-class European institutions: IMD, INSEAD and London Business School (LBS), as well as his own experience as dean of IAE Business School, from 1995 to 2008.

The logic of this book, which examines business school strategic leadership processes in practice, is explained in the following flow diagram (suggested by Alex Wilson, research fellow in strategic management at WBS).

Overall, the diagram tries to throw light on the critical role of strategic leadership in business schools. Deans have been variously described as ‘jugglers’, ‘jacks of all trades, but masters of none’, ‘dictators’, ‘doves of peace’ and ‘dragons’. Taken together, these metaphors illustrate the multifaceted, important and often stressful role of leading a business school as a university discipline and department. Deans are faced with reconciling contested identities as CEO, entrepreneur and scholar. Some of the most successful, such as George Bain (at LBS and, earlier, WBS), demonstrate how a range of characteristics, including integrity, humour, confidence, resilience, determination and scholarship, define the personality of a leader in the political process of leadership, and enable the chosen path and strategic direction – e.g. to beat INSEAD – to be understood by the
The introduction, ‘Global financial crisis: future challenges for strategic leadership, deans and business schools’, examines the impact of the global financial crisis and the opportunity it provides for deans and university leaders to create a new model for business schools and management education.

Chapter 1, ‘The business school landscape: trends and dilemmas’, examines the contrast between European and US business schools; each is seen to be embedded in a different competitive context with different competitive advantages.

Chapter 2, ‘Business schools as professional organisations (professional service firms)’, identifies the features of business schools as PSFs. There are clear similarities but the model is incomplete as the business school is neither a professional partnership (e.g. law firm) nor a consulting firm. Rather it is a hybrid form of the class P2 and MPB form seen in studies of PSFs.

Chapter 3, ‘The leadership process in business schools’, examines the competitive dynamics and future challenges in management education (Chapter 1), which, combined with the organizational nuances of PSFs (Chapter 2), provides a unique challenge to business school deans. It argues for examining the strategic leadership process from a political process perspective using the authors’ SLP model.

Chapter 4, ‘Strategic leadership in practice: leading the strategic process in three top business schools’, examines the strategic processes of internationalisation at three top business schools: IMD (Lausanne), INSEAD (Fontainebleau) and LBS (London).

Chapter 5, ‘Strategic leadership in practice: the role of the dean’, examines the specific cases of different deans at the three leading European business schools IMD, INSEAD and LBS.

Chapter 6, ‘Learning from the trenches: personal reflections on deanship’, examines the deanship roles of Fernando Fragueiro’s tenure as dean of IAE (a private school in Argentina) and Howard Thomas as dean at WBS (a leading publicly funded school in the United Kingdom).

Link: given the current criticisms of business schools and their role, the introduction identifies potentially evolutionary patterns for business schools and leadership.

Link: between these US/EU business schools, there are similar organisational features: these position business schools as professional service firms or knowledge-intensive firms.

However, these PSF characteristics present a particularly complex challenge to the leadership and strategic management of business schools.

Link: leading business schools have set about becoming international (global) leaders (Chapter 1); what does the process of internationalisation look like in three of the leading European schools as they attack ‘top ten’ places in the rankings?

Link: given the unique and varied nature of business schools and their ‘top ten’ aspirations (Chapters 1 and 2) what is the role of the dean in the internationalisation of these three leading schools?

Link: provides further insights into strategic leadership from the personal viewpoint of the authors’ experiences as dean; WBS is a strong contrast to IAE as a publicly funded school.
school’s multiple constituents (staff, students, alumni, business and government).

We hope that the insights developed from our strategic leadership process models and our case studies of strategic leadership in practice at IAE, IMD, INSEAD, LBS and WBS will provide useful material for debates and dialogue about future business school models, and, more importantly, stimulate further research in this area.

FERNANDO FRAGUEIRO
HOWARD THOMAS
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