

## Book Reviews / Comptes Rendus

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**James L. Fisher & James V. Koch. (1996). *Presidential Leadership: Making a Difference*. Phoenix, AZ: American Council on Education and The Oryx Press. Pp. xvii, 421. Price: \$34.95 US .**

Reviewed by Nancy Sheehan, Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia

For some faculty members leadership in academe is an oxymoron – neither wanted nor possible. Terms such as collegiality and academic decision-making, the role of committees, the existence of the Senate, and the emphasis on consensus underscore the university as an ivory tower with the professoriate in control. Presidents, vice presidents, deans, heads and chairs are perhaps tolerated as long as they exercise democratic behaviour and emphasize inclusive, participative governance based upon consensus. On the other hand the public assumes that Presidents and other academic administrators are leaders and able to effect change (despite a perception that most institutions have not experienced much change). Fisher and Koch's most recent work on the University/College Presidency calls the faculty view of democratic and shared leadership *transactional*. To them an emphasis on transacting the business of the University as agreed to by its community is one of the reasons colleges and universities are in difficulty. They believe it weakens the role of the President, emphasizes strong faculty control, and ultimately prevents substantive change from occurring. They reluctantly conclude that there is strong support in the academic community for this type of leadership.

*Presidential Leadership: Making a Difference* supports what the authors term the transformational model of presidential leadership. This model argues that presidents with vision and energy can make a difference, should make a difference, and that leadership requires making a difference. Although transformationalists believe in shared governance, they agree that individual accountability must be maintained, consensus is often not possible and that the President is the final authority under the Board. This view also supports the notion that the role of the Board is to set policy with the President and that it should not attempt to micromanage the institution.

Fisher and Koch base their transformational argument on empirically rooted research whose “. . . conclusions can be generally verified by a disinterested or even adversarial third party. Fisher's work is based in quantitative research methodology and reinforced by qualitative study” (p. xi). In making their case for transformational leadership on the basis of empirical research they have dismissed qualitative research as “little better than personal opinion” (p. xi). This is unfortunate because I do not believe we need to continue, ad infinitum, the quantitative/qualitative argument. Both have their place. Additionally many qualitative researchers will be supportive of the transformational argument put forth in this text even though their form of research methodology has been castigated!

Fisher and Koch's book is organized into five parts with 22 chapters. Part I reviews the literature on the Presidency, focuses on the theory of leadership and power, and on the limited empirical (read quantitative) evidence available. Part 2 addresses critical presidential characteristics, prioritizes them, includes the influence of race and gender, and relates these characteristics and influences to presidential performance. Part 3 has 10 chapters (6–16) focusing on the different constituencies a president deals with and on the number of tasks that need to be handled, solved, or delegated. Six chapters comprise Part 4 which examines the role of Boards of Governors and their relationship to their Presidents. Suffice it to say the argument is one of setting priorities and appointing a good president, not one of trying to administer or micro-manage the institution. Part 5 is the concluding chapter and although short, it

attempts to interpret the findings on presidential leadership in the context of the last half of this decade and the changing world facing institutions of higher education in the next decade.

There are 11 appendices directed to members of Boards and Presidents. These range from Appendix B which is *A Policy for Participation at Board Meetings*, to Appendices G, *Tax-sheltered Annuity/Other Benefits Agreements*, and K, *Sample Five-Year Employment Contract*. Although almost all of these are on matters between the President and the Board, Appendix A, *A History of Philanthropy*, should be of interest to a broader community. It closely associates fund-raising and philanthropy and argues that this is the highest calling of any presidency. To many faculty this latter idea may come across as heresy – surely the role of the Presidency is about teaching and learning and research – not fund-raising. And yet without sufficient and flexible resources an institution may suffer. As Koch and Fisher argue, fund-raising as a presidential responsibility has a long and honorable history in the United States.

This last comment on fund-raising highlights one of the historical differences between American and Canadian universities. Readers of this Journal will know that there are many differences between higher education institutions in the two countries and for them this book needs to be read from such a perspective. A lack of tradition of institutional fund-raising is one and, although this is changing, the amount of time and energy major fund-raising takes on behalf of the President and the senior leadership is not well understood by the faculty. Many among the professoriate in Canadian institutions believe that presidents should be on campus and visible most of the time.

A second difference is that Canadian universities and colleges are all public institutions whose main source of revenue is the specific provincial government. This means that, although they are autonomous under University Acts, government policy can and does interfere with policy setting and with the financial decisions of the Board and the President. Although many US institutions are public this notion of interference is not one addressed by Fisher and Koch. Given the difficulties recently

experienced by many public institutions in the US (Berkeley, UCLA, Michigan, SUNY, etc.) this is very surprising.

A third difference and, again, one not well addressed in this book, is that of unionized staff and faculty. All institutions in Canada operate with their clerical and technical staff as members of various unions. In more than half of our institutions the faculty is also unionized and even teaching assistants have organized and bargain conditions of employment with the University. The authors do address collective bargaining and indicate that often agreements are negotiated at the state level. The point is made that collective bargaining can be both positive and negative. However, since the issue in this book is transformational leadership, not enough attention is paid to the even greater skill and vision and charisma a president will need to be able to accomplish change under such conditions. To indicate that the presidential honeymoon is a time to accomplish wonders with regard to changing collective agreements (as suggested) may be viewed as cynical and an attempt to discredit the union.

Among the numerous constituencies with which the president must interact, one glaring omission is that of the deans. Universities and colleges operate with a senior leadership that includes a dean for each school or college within an American institution and each Faculty in Canadian universities. A lack of attention to this group of academic administrators who must function and act as the translators between the central administration and the faculty is an interesting oversight. Particularly is this true when one looks at the very large number of constituencies that Fisher and Koch believe are important to the transformational president. I question the ability of the president to be effective if his or her deans are not on side. Perhaps the authors assume that deans are loyal and will follow the presidential lead without the necessity of being included as a group. As a dean I believe this to be a short-sighted view.

*Presidential Leadership: Making a Difference* is an interesting read. It includes a hierarchy of characteristics necessary for successful leadership, spends some time on TQM – Total Quality Management – which the authors disavow, has a section on the Presidential Spouse, provides a list of do's and don'ts for dealing with the faculty, and generally includes lots of information, anecdotes, and examples of what works and why it

works. It should be of particular benefit to any Board currently searching for a new President.

I recommend it as a practical source for aspiring Presidents and for Board members, despite its disparaging comments about qualitative research methodology. It is discouraging that academics of the stature of Fisher and Koch believe that to promote their own work they must undercut the research of those who support a competing point of view and who use a different research methodology.



**Ronald J. Manheimer, Denise D. Snodgrass, & Diane Moskow-McKenzie. (1995). *Older Adult Education: A Guide to Research Programs, and Policies*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. Pp. xviii, 245. Price: \$65 US (hardcover).**

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*Older Adult Education* is an important and well documented text about the emergence and organization of older adult education in the United States. However, in preparing this review I was acutely aware that older adult education is under-documented in Canada and that older adult education and adult education general are not sustained by comparable Canadian public or educational policy. These issues must be kept in mind as one reads the book.

*Older Adult Education* summarizes broadly the history and growth of older adult education in the United States. The authors are directors and adult educators at the North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement, affiliated with The University of North Carolina at Asheville. The central question shaping the book is “what profile might emerge about the role of education in the lives of older adults today and the huge population bulge of baby boomers soon to follow?” (p. ixv). The profile is about older adults fifty plus engaged in organized learning activities and about the agencies in the community and post-secondary institutions that offer them. The book is organized into six chapters and nine appen-