



DIGITAL ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP IN KAZAKHSTAN:

EXPLORING ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Aruzhan Karimtayeva & Dr. Miray Dogan

L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan



BACKGROUND

- Higher education is rapidly transforming due to digital technologies affecting teaching, learning, research, and governance.
- Digital tools enable new forms of communication, collaboration, and knowledge production in academic environments.
- Digital academic leadership has become a critical competency for guiding institutional change.
- It refers to the strategies and skills used by leaders to integrate digital technologies into education, research, and management.
- Despite growing attention, limited research exists on how this concept is understood within academic communities, particularly in emerging contexts such as Kazakhstan.



DIGITAL ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP IN KAZAKHSTAN

- Academic leadership in Kazakhstan is evolving through national reforms and a strong focus on digital transformation.
- Government initiatives (e-learning platforms, digital management systems, alignment with international standards) are accelerating the digitalization of higher education.
- These changes create opportunities to improve institutional effectiveness and global competitiveness. However, challenges persist, including unequal access to digital resources, limited leadership competencies, and resistance to change.
- Digital academic leadership is a dynamic construct requiring the integration of traditional leadership approaches with innovative digital practices.
- This study explores how digital academic leadership is conceptualized within academic communities.



WHAT IS DIGITAL ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP?

- In the contemporary, post-pandemic context, digital academic leadership (DAL) has become a key determinant of institutional effectiveness.
- Digital platforms are now central to teaching, learning, research, and institutional management.
- DAL refers to the strategic integration of digital tools (online learning platforms, social media, webinars) to support academic and managerial processes.
- It encompasses leaders' abilities to analyze, adapt, and effectively apply digital technologies within institutional practices.
- DAL reflects a critical shift toward digitally adaptive leadership in higher education.



AIM OF THE STUDY



This study aims to examine how academics in higher education conceptualize and understand digital academic leadership.

Understanding academics' perceptions is essential because they are key actors in the adoption of digital technologies in educational environments. Their experiences offer valuable insights into the skills, opportunities, and challenges related to digital academic leadership in modern educational institutions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS



RQ1 How is digital academic leadership defined and conceptualized in academic literature?



RQ2 What competencies and skills are associated with effective digital academic leadership?



RQ3 What challenges and opportunities are identified in the implementation of digital academic leadership in higher education institutions?



METHOD

- This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design.
- Aim:** To explore academics' lived experiences and perceptions of digital academic leadership.
- Phenomenology focuses on:
 - Understanding individual experiences
 - Interpreting the meanings assigned to a phenomenon
- The phenomenon examined: The concept and practice of digital academic leadership in educational settings.



STUDY GROUP

Characteristic	Category	n
Field of Study	Educational Sciences	20
	Social Sciences	10
	Natural Sciences	5
Academic Title	Associate Professor	4
	Assistant Professor	20
	Lecturer	6
	Research Assistant	5
Professional Experience	21 years and over	6
	11–20 years	13
	1–10 years	16
Gender	Female	18
	Male	17



DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS



Descriptive Analysis

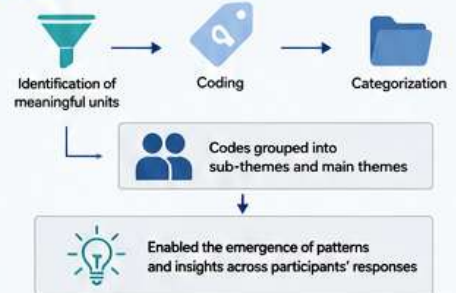
Applied to focus group interviews
Organized around themes aligned with research questions.



Content Analysis

Applied to open-ended questionnaire data
Followed an inductive approach (codes derived from data)

Process:



Questions	Theme	Sub-theme	Codes
Q1	Definition of digital academic leadership	Understanding of digital academic leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technological focus, leadership role, strategic direction Transformational approach, innovation, integration of pedagogy and technology
Q2	Key Skills Required for Digital Academic Leadership in Universities	Technological literacy, strategic thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital competence, data-driven decision-making, and strategic planning Adaptability, innovation, and continuous professional development
Q3	Digital transformation in universities	Professional learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured implementation of digital strategies, policy-driven transformation, and governance Adaptive change, innovation culture, and continuous institutional development
Q4	Challenges in digital academic leadership	Innovation with data privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technological barriers, inadequate infrastructure, and resource constraints Investment in digital systems, accessibility, and sustainable implementation
Q5	Influence on teaching quality and staff performance	Evidence-based practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardization of teaching practices, use of digital platforms, and quality assurance Creativity, flexibility, and innovation in teaching approaches



CONCLUSION

Digital academic leadership is crucial for the digital transformation of universities.

EFFECTIVE LEADERS:



Integrate technology with strategic vision



Support pedagogical innovation



Enhance teachers' professional competence



Improve teaching quality and staff performance