

Progressive leadership paradigm in strengthening the implementation of the tri dharma of higher education lecturers: a conceptual study

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ABSTRAK

Pelaksanaan Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi merupakan mandat fundamental dosen yang menuntut dukungan kepemimpinan akademik yang adaptif dan transformatif. Namun, praktik kepemimpinan perguruan tinggi masih cenderung berorientasi administratif dan birokratis, sehingga berpotensi membatasi optimalisasi peran dosen dalam pengajaran, penelitian, dan pengabdian kepada masyarakat. Artikel ini bertujuan mengkaji secara konseptual paradigma kepemimpinan progresif dalam penguatan pelaksanaan Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi dosen. Metode yang digunakan adalah kajian konseptual melalui analisis kritis terhadap literatur kepemimpinan pendidikan tinggi dan kebijakan Tri Dharma. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan progresif berperan penting dalam memberdayakan dosen, membangun iklim akademik yang kolaboratif, serta mengintegrasikan pengajaran, penelitian, dan pengabdian sebagai satu kesatuan akademik. Implikasi konseptual kajian ini menegaskan bahwa pengembangan kepemimpinan perguruan tinggi perlu diarahkan pada pendekatan yang adaptif, partisipatif, dan berorientasi pada keberlanjutan mutu pendidikan tinggi.

Kata Kunci: tri dharma perguruan tinggi; kepemimpinan; dosen

ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education is a fundamental mandate for lecturers that requires the support of adaptive and transformative academic leadership. However, higher education leadership practices still tend to be administratively and bureaucratically oriented, which may limit the optimization of lecturers' roles in teaching, research, and community service. This article aims to conceptually examine the paradigm of progressive leadership in strengthening lecturers' implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education. The method employed is a conceptual study through critical analysis of the literature on higher education leadership and Tri Dharma policies. The findings indicate that progressive leadership plays a crucial role in empowering lecturers, fostering a collaborative academic climate, and integrating teaching, research, and community service as a unified academic endeavor. The conceptual implications of this study emphasize that the development of higher education leadership should be directed toward adaptive, participatory, and quality-sustainability-oriented approaches in higher education.

Keyword: tri dharma of higher education; leadership; lecturers

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1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions play a strategic role in developing human resources, advancing knowledge, and contributing to the resolution of various social issues in society. This strategic role is realised through the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, which encompasses education and teaching, research, and community service. The Tri Dharma is not only an institutional obligation but also a professional mandate for lecturers as educators and scientists.

In practice, the implementation of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi by lecturers still faces various challenges. High administrative burdens, limited policy support and resources, and an academic culture that is not yet fully collaborative often result in the implementation of the Tri Dharma being partial and not integrated (Sasia & Doringin, 2023; Brilyanti, 2022; Laksmi & Astuti, 2024). Teaching, research, and community service activities are often positioned as separate tasks, so that the potential for synergy between the three pillars has not been optimally utilised. In addition, the dynamics of global change, developments in digital technology, and increasing demands for accountability and quality in higher education are driving universities to transform their governance and leadership. Conventional leadership patterns that are bureaucratic and administrative in nature are considered less responsive to the needs of lecturer capacity building and academic innovation (Molek-Kozakowska & Geisler, 2020; Pecamucya, 2025). Therefore, a more adaptive, visionary, and human resource-oriented leadership paradigm is needed.

The progressive leadership paradigm presents itself as an alternative leadership approach that emphasises transformative vision, openness to change, participatory decision-making, and the strengthening of collaboration and innovation. In the context of higher education, progressive leadership views lecturers as strategic partners in the development of institutional Tri Dharma, not merely as policy implementers, thereby placing lecturers as key actors in achieving the vision and goals of higher education (Mawardi & Violin, 2023). This type of leadership is expected to create an academic climate conducive to strengthening the implementation of the Tri Dharma in an integrated and sustainable manner.

Based on the above description, a conceptual study of the progressive leadership paradigm in strengthening the implementation of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi (Three Pillars of Higher Education) by lecturers is important to conduct. This study is expected to provide a theoretical basis for the development of a higher education leadership model that is more humanistic, adaptive, and oriented towards improving lecturer performance and the tangible contribution of higher education institutions to society.

The implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education by lecturers cannot be separated from the context of leadership in higher education institutions. Various policies, academic cultures, and human resource management systems are greatly influenced by the leadership paradigm adopted by higher education leaders. However, to date, leadership practices in higher education are still often administrative and procedural in nature, and therefore have not been fully able to encourage the strengthening of the implementation of the Tri Dharma in an integrative, innovative, and sustainable manner.

This article is a conceptual study that limits its discussion to the paradigm of progressive leadership in the context of institutional leadership in higher education and its implications for strengthening the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education by lecturers. This study is not intended to evaluate lecturer performance, measure the achievement of the Tri Dharma empirically, or analyse technical policies at specific institutions. The discussion focuses on a theoretical analysis of the characteristics of progressive leadership, the role of leadership in building an academic climate, and the conceptual mechanisms that enable the strengthening of the integration of education and teaching, research, and community service. Thus, this article aims to offer a conceptual framework that can be used as a reflective reference in the development of higher education leadership.

The implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education by lecturers requires leadership support that is not only administrative in nature, but also capable of fostering an academic climate conducive to the integration of education and teaching, research, and community service (Gunawan et al., 2024; Yusup et al., 2021). However, the leadership paradigm in higher education is still often practised procedurally, so it is not yet optimal in encouraging the strengthening of the lecturer's role holistically.

Based on these conditions, the main issue in this study is how the progressive leadership paradigm is understood in the context of higher education leadership and how its conceptual characteristics can play a role in strengthening the implementation of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi by lecturers, without the intention of conducting empirical measurements or evaluations of specific institutional performance. This article aims to conceptually examine the paradigm of progressive leadership in the context of higher education and its implications for strengthening the implementation of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi (Three Pillars of Higher Education) by lecturers.

This study is directed at developing a theoretical understanding of the characteristics of progressive leadership and its role in building an academic climate that supports the integration of education and teaching, research, and community service, as well as developing a conceptual framework that can be used as a reflective reference for the development of adaptive and sustainable higher education leadership.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This article uses a conceptual study method with a qualitative approach based on literature studies (Kaharap et al, 2025). A conceptual study was chosen because the purpose of this article is not to collect or analyse empirical data, but rather to develop a theoretical understanding and framework of thinking regarding

the progressive leadership paradigm and its relevance in strengthening the implementation of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi (Three Pillars of Higher Education) by lecturers. This approach allows the author to examine, synthesise, and interpret various relevant ideas, concepts, and theories systematically and critically.

The data sources in this study consist of academic literature, including scientific books, national and international journal articles, and higher education policy documents relevant to the themes of educational leadership and the Tri Dharma of Higher Education. The literature was selected based on its relevance to the concepts of progressive leadership, higher education leadership, and strengthening the role of lecturers in education and teaching, research, and community service.

The analysis technique was carried out through a process of concept reduction, theme categorisation, and theoretical synthesis (Harahap et al, 2024). At this stage, various perspectives and conceptual findings were analysed to identify the main characteristics of progressive leadership and the conceptual mechanisms that link it to the strengthening of the implementation of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi (Three Pillars of Higher Education) by lecturers. The results of the analysis are then compiled into a coherent theoretical argument to produce a conceptual framework that can be used as a reflective reference in the development of higher education leadership.

Table 1. Discussion Framework of the Article

No	Focus of Discussion	Main Substance	Purpose of Analysis
1	The Concept of Progressive Leadership in Higher Education	Definition of progressive leadership, basic principles, and key characteristics in the context of higher education leadership, such as educational vision, innovation, collaboration, and faculty empowerment.	Establishing a theoretical foundation for progressive leadership as a basis for conceptual analysis.
2	The Tri Dharma of Higher Education and the Challenges of its Implementation by Lecturers	The concept of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education and the conceptual and educational challenges in its implementation, including issues of integration of education and teaching, research, and service to education.	Explaining the context of the problems in implementing the Tri Dharma as the background for leadership analysis.
3	The Role of Progressive Leadership in Building an Academic Climate	The role of progressive leadership in creating a conducive academic climate, including a collaborative culture, trust, responsible academic freedom, and support for academic innovation.	Analysing the relationship between leadership paradigms and academic conditions that support lecturer performance.
4	Progressive Leadership and Strengthening the Implementation of the Tri Dharma of Lecturers	Analysing the conceptual mechanisms of how progressive leadership facilitates the strengthening of the implementation of the Tri Dharma through strategic policies, institutional support, and the empowerment of lecturers as the main educators.	Demonstrating the theoretical relationship between progressive leadership and the strengthening of the Tri Dharma of lecturers.
5	Conceptual Implications for the Development of Higher Education Leadership	Conceptual reflection on the implications of applying progressive leadership for the development of an adaptive and sustainable higher education leadership model.	Formulating theoretical contributions and directions for the development of educational leadership () in higher education.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *The Concept of Progressive Leadership in Higher Education*

Progressive leadership in higher education can be elaborated as a leadership model based on a long-term vision for institutional transformation, the ability to adapt to changes in the strategic environment, and a strong commitment to empowering the academic community (Ambawani et al, 2024; Santoso et al, 2024). This approach emphasises that higher education institutions cannot be managed solely through bureaucratic and administrative leadership patterns, but require leaders who are capable of becoming change agents in facing the demands of globalisation, developments in science and technology, and the dynamics of higher education policy. In the progressive leadership paradigm, leaders are positioned as facilitators and inspirers who encourage academic innovation in the fields of learning, research, and community service (Mawardi et al, 2023; Sholikhin, 2023; Indaryanti et al, 2025). Leaders do not only set policies in a top-down manner, but also open up space for dialogue, critical reflection, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Thus, the academic culture that is formed is one that values freedom of thought, scientific creativity, and collective responsibility for the quality of the three pillars of higher education.

Furthermore, progressive leadership requires high sensitivity to the internal and external dynamics of the institution (Mesiono et al, 2024; Ambawani et al, 2024). Internally, leaders need to understand the

characteristics of human resources, particularly lecturers, including their competencies, motivations, and the challenges they face in carrying out their academic roles. Externally, leaders must be able to read the direction of environmental changes, such as the needs of the world of work, community demands, and national and international standards for higher education (Farida, 2024).

The ability to read this context is the basis for formulating relevant and sustainable strategic policies. In relation to the role of lecturers, progressive leadership is oriented towards optimising potential and performance through an empowerment approach. Lecturers are viewed as strategic partners, not merely policy implementers. Therefore, leaders need to create a supportive work environment, provide opportunities for continuous professional development, and provide space for responsible academic autonomy. Through this type of leadership, higher education institutions are expected to be able to build a dynamic, innovative, and highly competitive academic ecosystem, while still adhering to academic values and scientific ethics.

B. *The Tri Dharma of Higher Education and the Challenges of its Implementation by Lecturers*

The Tri Dharma of Higher Education is a fundamental mandate that is inherently attached to the identity and professionalism of lecturers as educators, researchers, and community service practitioners (Poh et al, 2025; Jati et al, 2023). These three pillars do not stand alone, but are integrated in building scientific knowledge, social relevance, and the real contribution of higher education to community development. Through education and teaching, lecturers transform knowledge; through research, lecturers develop and renew knowledge; while through community service, lecturers ensure that the results of this knowledge have a meaningful social impact (Prada et al., 2022; Yulianyaha et al., 2023, Tarjiah et al., 2022). However, in institutional practice, the implementation of the Tri Dharma often faces various structural and cultural challenges.

High administrative burdens (Putra & Pelayun, 2020; Gautama et al., 2020), fragmented performance appraisal systems, and an achievement orientation that emphasises quantitative aspects over academic quality can reduce lecturers' focus on the substance of the Tri Dharma (Retnowati et al., 2018; , Kiswanto et al., 2022). As a result, educational, research, and community service activities tend to be carried out separately, normatively, and merely to fulfil administrative obligations, rather than as an integrated and reflective academic process.

This condition has the potential to obscure the strategic meaning of the Tri Dharma as the foundation for the development of science-based higher education and public service. Therefore, a leadership approach is needed that not only demands individual performance achievements but is also capable of building a support system conducive to the integration of the Tri Dharma. Visionary and progressive leadership is expected to be able to harmonise policies, governance, and academic culture so that lecturers can implement the Tri Dharma in a more systemic, collaborative, and sustainable manner, as well as being oriented towards improving academic quality and long-term social impact.

C. *The Role of Progressive Leadership in Building an Academic Climate*

Progressive leadership plays a strategic role in building an academic climate that is conducive to the optimal and meaningful implementation of the Tri Dharma of lecturers (Pratama et al, 2024). Through the formulation of inclusive policies, dialogical communication patterns, and the strengthening of academic values such as integrity, academic freedom, and scientific collaboration, progressive leadership is able to create an institutional environment that supports the growth of lecturers' creativity and innovation (Sayrani, 2019; Riffaudin et al, 2020). In such a climate, lecturers are encouraged not only to fulfil their formal obligations but also to develop reflective and quality-oriented academic practices.

Furthermore, the academic climate fostered through progressive leadership facilitates synergy between the pillars of the Tri Dharma. Educational and teaching activities can be enriched by the results of lecturers' research, while community service becomes a vehicle for the application and dissemination of science that is relevant to social needs (Putra & Pelayun, 2020). Consistent institutional support, including in the form of performance- t awards, capacity building, and the provision of collaboration spaces, enables lecturers to carry out the Tri Dharma in an integrated and sustainable manner. Thus, the implementation of the Tri Dharma is no longer understood merely as an administrative individual obligation, but as an integral part of the strategic vision and academic culture of higher education institutions.

Progressive leadership serves as a guide and enhancer of the academic ecosystem, ensuring that every lecturer's activity is in line with institutional goals, the improvement of higher education quality, and tangible contributions to the development of science and the welfare of society.

D. *Progressive Leadership and Strengthening the Implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education Lecturers*

The progressive leadership paradigm plays a strategic role in strengthening the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education for lecturers because it positions leadership not merely as an administrative function, but as a transformative process that shapes the direction, culture, and academic dynamics of the institution (Apdian & Prado, 2024; Yusuf & Ismail, 2025). Within this framework, progressive leadership is

understood as leadership that is oriented towards long-term vision, responsive to change, and focused on empowering lecturers as the main actors of the Tri Dharma. In the context of education and teaching, progressive leadership plays a role in encouraging learning innovation and improving the quality of academic processes (Idris et al., 2025; Hutasuhut, 2025). Progressive leaders not only demand administrative achievements, but also create reflective and experimental spaces for lecturers to develop adaptive, contextual learning approaches that are relevant to scientific developments and student needs. Through policy support, professional development facilitation, and strengthening academic culture, progressive leadership enables lecturers to carry out their pedagogical roles in a more meaningful and sustainable manner.

In the field of research, progressive leadership plays a strategic role in building and strengthening a conducive, collaborative, and sustainable higher education research ecosystem (Yuningsih & Herawan, 2017). Progressive leadership views research activities not merely as an individual lecturer's obligation to meet performance indicators, but as an academic process that is integrated with the institution's vision and broader scientific contributions (Hutauruk, 2025). Within this framework, research is positioned as a means of developing lecturers' academic capacity as well as an instrument for strengthening the quality and competitiveness of higher education institutions.

Progressive leadership encourages the formation of a collaborative research culture by strengthening cross-disciplinary, cross-unit, and even cross-institutional cooperation. This approach opens up space for lecturers to develop more innovative research ideas that are relevant to scientific developments and the needs of society (Yuningsih & Herawan, 2017; Rumbay et al, 2022). Institutionally facilitated collaboration not only enriches scientific perspectives but also improves the quality and impact of research outcomes. In addition, progressive leadership emphasises the importance of openness to new ideas and diverse methodological approaches. Leaders with a progressive paradigm tend to encourage lecturers to break out of repetitive and normative research patterns and dare to explore contextual and transformative research themes (Callysta, 2025). In this context, leadership functions as a facilitator that creates a safe climate for lecturers to innovate, experiment, and develop long-term research agendas.

Furthermore, progressive leadership directs the utilisation of research results as a basis for academic decision-making and institutional policy development. The research results of lecturers are not only positioned as academic outputs, but also as a source of knowledge that can strengthen strategic planning, curriculum development, and improve the quality of higher education governance (Qomaruddin & Sundjoto, 2021; Prawirawati, 2025). Thus, research becomes an integral part of the continuous institutional learning cycle. Through this approach, progressive leadership contributes to building a strong scientific culture, characterised by increased lecturer involvement in research activities, the growth of a reflective academic community, and the strengthening of the academic reputation of higher education institutions. This orientation emphasises that research, from a progressive leadership perspective, is not only directed at fulfilling lecturers' workloads but also at creating long-term academic value for the institution and the wider community.

In the implementation of community service, progressive leadership plays an important role in integrating teaching and research outcomes into activities that have a real and sustainable social impact. This leadership paradigm views community service not as an additional activity separate from academic activities, but as a strategic space for transforming academic knowledge into contextual solutions to community issues (Aung & Hallinger, 2022; Asaf et al, 2024). Thus, community service is positioned as an integral part of the interrelated and mutually reinforcing Tri Dharma cycle. Progressive leadership encourages lecturers to interpret community service as a vehicle for scientific actualisation and internalisation of academic values. Within this framework, lecturers not only act as programme implementers, but also as intellectual partners of the community who contribute through scientific-based approaches and critical reflection. This approach allows community service to evolve from ceremonial activities into relevant, contextual, and empowerment-oriented academic practices.

In addition, progressive leadership contributes to strengthening the social relevance of community service programmes through policies that support the sustainability and continuity of activities. Leaders with a progressive paradigm encourage community service planning that is aligned with the institution's research and development agenda, so that community service programmes do not stop at short-term activities but develop into models of sustainable social intervention (Chemodanova et al, 2022; Lamm et al, 2021). In this context, community service becomes a means of mutual learning between universities and the community. Furthermore, progressive leadership positions community service as a form of social responsibility for universities based on academic values (Martínez & Acosta-Leal, 2022). Through the integration of teaching, research, and community service, progressive leadership strengthens the role of higher education institutions as agents of social change that not only produce knowledge but also make real contributions to improving the quality of life of the community.

With this approach, community service functions as a bridge between the academic world and social reality, while strengthening the social legitimacy of higher education institutions. Conceptually, the main strength of progressive leadership in strengthening the Tri Dharma lies in its ability to integrate the three pillars of the Tri Dharma into a single, comprehensive academic framework. Progressive leadership facilitates the connection between teaching, research, and community service through the creation of an academic climate that encourages synergy, critical reflection, and continuous innovation.

Within this framework, lecturers are not positioned as implementers of fragmented policies, but rather as empowered academic subjects who have the space to contribute optimally. Thus, the progressive leadership paradigm can be understood as a relevant conceptual approach in strengthening the implementation of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi (Three Pillars of Higher Education) by lecturers. Through a transformative vision, lecturer empowerment, and strengthening the academic climate, progressive leadership has the potential to become an important foundation for the development of adaptive, high-quality higher education that is oriented towards academic and social sustainability.

E. Conceptual Implications for the Development of Higher Education Leadership

Conceptually, this discussion emphasises that strengthening the implementation of the Tri Dharma of lecturers requires a leadership paradigm that transcends administrative and bureaucratic approaches. Progressive leadership offers a leadership framework that is oriented towards empowering lecturers, integrating the Tri Dharma, and strengthening an adaptive academic climate. These conceptual implications can form the basis for the development of a higher education leadership model that is more responsive to contemporary academic challenges and oriented towards the sustainability of higher education quality. Furthermore, the progressive leadership paradigm requires a shift in perspective in university management, from an orientation of control and compliance to a facilitative and participatory approach.

Within this framework, university leaders play a role in creating space for academic dialogue, supporting the professional autonomy of lecturers, and encouraging synergy between the elements of the Tri Dharma as a whole. This approach enables lecturers to develop their academic capacity in a sustainable manner, while strengthening the institution's adaptability to the dynamics of policy changes, scientific developments, and community demands. Thus, progressive leadership is not only relevant as a managerial approach, but also as a conceptual foundation for the development of sustainable and academically-oriented higher education leadership. Overall, this discussion shows that strengthening the implementation of the Tri Dharma Perguruan Tinggi (Three Pillars of Higher Education) by lecturers cannot be separated from a leadership paradigm that is capable of responding to the complexity and dynamics of contemporary higher education.

Progressive leadership offers a conceptual framework that positions lecturers as empowered academic subjects and encourages the integration of teaching, research, and community service within a cohesive academic ecosystem. Through the strengthening of a collaborative, adaptive, and reflective academic climate, progressive leadership has the potential to strengthen the quality of the implementation of the Tri Dharma in a sustainable manner. Thus, this paradigm is relevant to be considered as the basis for the development of higher education leadership that is not only oriented towards administrative achievements, but also towards strengthening academic quality and institutional social responsibility.

4. CONCLUSION

This article affirms that the progressive leadership paradigm has strong conceptual relevance in strengthening the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education by lecturers. Progressive leadership is understood as a leadership approach that transcends administrative and bureaucratic functions, placing the empowerment of lecturers, the integration of the Tri Dharma, and the strengthening of the academic climate as its main focus. Through this approach, the implementation of teaching, research, and community service can be understood as an interconnected whole that contributes to the sustainable development of academic quality in higher education. The conceptual implications of this study indicate that the development of higher education leadership needs to be directed towards the formation of an adaptive, participatory leadership model that is oriented towards strengthening the academic capacity of lecturers. Progressive leadership can be used as a reference framework in designing leadership policies and practices that support the synergy of the Tri Dharma, encourage academic innovation, and strengthen the social role of higher education institutions. Thus, the progressive leadership paradigm not only functions as a managerial approach but also as a strategic foundation for the development of higher education that is responsive to contemporary academic challenges and oriented towards quality sustainability.

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