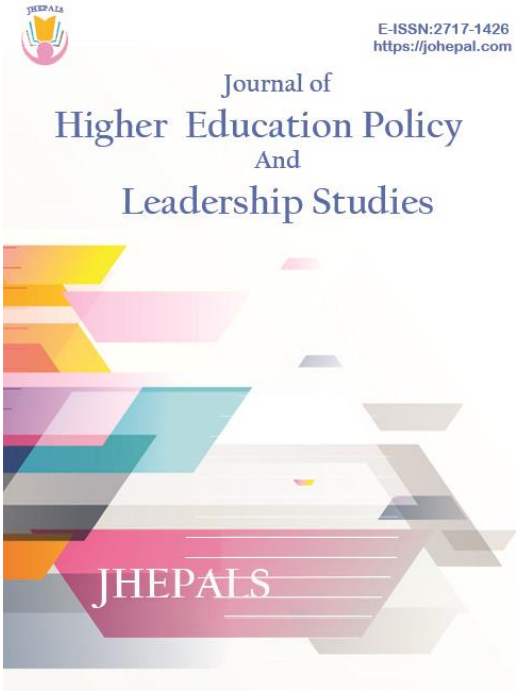
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Editorial Note

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Journal of Higher Education Policy And Leadership Studies (JHEPALS) with its commitment to *the rigor of the research, the enriched nature of methodologies of the studies,* and *the novel and innovative research findings and recommendations* for researchers, leaders, and policy-makers aims to foster novel ideas within the realm of higher education policy and leadership based on its eleven pivotal Aims and Scope.

In alignment with the journal's policy in terms of distribution of authors as well as novelty of ideas/ research practices; JHEPALS JUNE Issue 2026 (Volume 7/ Issue 2) presents novel and innovative research from both higher education leaders and scholars with more than three decades of extensive research; and also novice researchers whose voices and works matter to the HE scholars, students, and policy-makers worldwide.

There are five research in the ARTICLES section of the journal which present timely research in a global scope and are finally selected after rigorous double-blind review procedure.

Leah Hakkola and Jade Laplante in their research "*Examining an Equity-Minded Search Training as a Catalyst for More Inclusive Faculty Hiring*" examined the ways in which a Predominantly White multi-campus university system in the Northeastern United States restructured its system-wide Equal Opportunity search training to assist participants in centering diversity and equity in their searches. They designed and evaluated a pre and post survey to examine the ways in which participation in the equity-minded search training affected respondents' critical understanding of equity and diversity and potentially enriched notions of fairness in the search process. This study advances scholarship focused on the positive impact equity-mindedness can have when thoughtfully implemented into a university-led intervention.

In "*Scaling Leadership Support: Evidence-Informed Workload Policies for Department Chairs in Growing Public Universities*", Su-I Hou investigates how institutional growth and department size shape department chair leadership effectiveness, providing evidence-based policy recommendations for higher education governing boards, institutional administrators, and policymakers. In this study she demonstrates that uniform policies for

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department chair roles across units of vastly different sizes create a fundamental misalignment between institutional policy and operational realities. The empirical evidence reveals that administrative burden and resource needs scale with department size in non-linear, complex ways that demand differentiated policy responses.

Buket Kip Kayabaş and İlker Kayabaş in their research "*The Integration of Micro-Credentials in Higher Education: A Systematic Review and a Strategic Reset Model*" explain that the rapid digitalization of the labor market has widened the gap between graduate competencies and industry needs, challenging the relevance of traditional higher education degrees. While micro-credentials have emerged as agile solutions to bridge this gap, their integration into formal academic structures remains fragmented and theoretically under-conceptualized. They analyze the pedagogical, administrative, and legal strategies for integrating micro-credentials into higher education and to identify the barriers hindering this process.

In the fourth research "*Teaching AI Literacy in Higher Education: A Systematic Review and Pedagogical Analysis Using the 4Ps Framework*", Bahar Bandali, Amir Asgari, and Razyieh Shahverdi in their systematic review synthesize findings from 25 peer-reviewed empirical studies published between 2019 and 2025, focusing on instructional methods and challenges related to teaching AI literacy in higher education. Guided by a custom-developed 4P Framework—Pedagogical Approaches, Purpose of Instruction, Participant Profiles, and Platforms & Tools—the review identifies dominant trends such as the widespread use of project-based learning, the central role of ChatGPT and other generative AI tools, and a pedagogical shift toward ethical reflection and interdisciplinary integration.

Yousun Shin, Hee Sun Kang, and So Yun Park in their research "*Prediction of Admission Decisions Using Machine Learning Models: An Analysis of the Holistic Undergraduate Admissions Review Process in Korea*" examine and validate the consistency and predictive patterns of human-led undergraduate admissions decisions through the application of machine learning models. Unlike traditional holistic evaluation processes conducted by human assessors, they compared five machine learning algorithms – Gradient Boosting, Random Forest, Support Vector Machine, Logistic Regression, and XGBoost – to identify the most accurate prediction model. They not only provide practical recommendations for improving prediction accuracy but also inform future research directions in data-driven strategies for high-stakes educational assessment.

The REFLECTION section of the journal is also a channel for the researchers to share their studies and adopt the novel ideas and innovative key points in other research as a stage to work on new research projects. In this regard, research submitted to this section also go through the same evaluation procedure by the editors-in-chief, members of the editorial team, and reviewers to ensure the works we publish meet all the journal's requirements.

Simon J. Rhodes, Jane R. Williams, and N. Douglas Lees in their research "*Guiding Principles for Academic Leadership: Clichés, Proverbs, and Sayings Applicable to Academic Leadership*"

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take an approach to suggest principles to describe and develop critical "soft skill" areas of leadership using familiar sayings that allow leaders to prevent and deal with issues in accord with their personal values. Topics include leader values and their relationship to personal behavior, personnel management, finance, conflict resolution, and change management.

In "*Using Traits of Leadership to Overcome the Challenges of Becoming and Being a New Teacher in Ontario*", Benjamin Kutsyuruba and Dylan Lewis portray a self-study and collaborative response to an early career teacher (ECT) facing challenges in the first year of teaching. They discuss the greatest challenges the ECT experienced in the first year and the ways in which the ECT overcame them through leadership. They conclude with system-level recommendations developed from these experiences.

We also receive numerous works for the COLLOQUIUM section of the journal; however, we have to be selective to present the novel and innovative works which provide insightful ideas for the research community worldwide. In some cases, we even invite the authors of research articles to consider resubmission of their works to the colloquium section of the journal based on the reviewers' comments and editorial decision.

Francisco Xavier Sánchez-Pérez, Juan E. Núñez-Ríos, Jacqueline Y. Sánchez-García, Alejandra Núñez-Acosta, and Carlos López-Hernández in this colloquium "*Developing Soft Skills to Strengthen Leadership Training for University Students*" present the results of an empirical study on leadership training that we conducted with the support of a private Mexican university; as such, it focuses on analyzing the educational and institutional implications of multivariate techniques. Through a multivariate analysis, they highlight the need to integrate both strategic and social-emotional skills training within an ethics-based framework. Further, they illuminate that collaboration between universities and industry remains a viable option for implementing projects that help students tackle more realistic leadership situations and, at the same time, facilitate a more contextualized assessment of their progress.

In the INTERVIEW section "*Becoming a Qualitative Methodologist*", we have the honor and privilege to host Dr. Janet Salmons. Dr. Janet is globally renowned for her in-depth knowledge and expertise within the realm of Research Methodology (QUAL specifically); as well as her more than three decades of experience in alignment with her eclectic, inter-disciplinary interests as methods innovation, collaboration, creativity, and ethics in a digital world. Dr. Janet's critical, thought-provoking, and valuable responses intertwined with her research experience in higher education will be interesting to a wide range of audience, including journal publishers, editors-in-chief, researchers, (post)graduate students, and policy-makers in higher education.

Hopefully, JHEPALS also receives numerous book reviews which are thoroughly reviewed by the editors-in-chief and the members of editorial team to select the most suitable book review which meets the academic rigorous criteria of the journal. The book review meets

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the journal's requirements in terms of its relevance to the HE community, being timely, including novel ideas with a focus to bridge the available gap in the knowledge about HE Policy and Leadership, as well as the reputation of the book authors and the publishers. The review procedure happens by the members of editorial board to select the most suitable work for this section.

Bethany Carmien Onwodi in her review of the book "*The Caring University: Reimagining the Higher Education Workplace after the Great Resignation*" by Kevin R. McClure concludes that the book tacitly acknowledges that The Great Resignation was not a singular event with short-lived implications; rather, a post-pandemic working world was introduced and in it, what defines institutional success and employee satisfaction continues to be negotiated. Adding to the "new normal" is an uncertain future for higher education institutions and environments as they continue to face political, ideological, and legislative onslaughts. This book was published in a precarious calm between storms in higher education and provides valuable insights and strategies for institutions to choose from in planning to weather further tumult. There are twenty distinct approaches to developing facets of The Caring University; some may be more easily adopted, and the book is less of a blueprint to achieving the utopian employer than it is a guide for developing organizational care within an institution, with vast opportunity to continue developing the concept of organizational care in research as well as practice.

Editors' final note:

JHEPALS team works in a collaborative, academic, unified, and friendly environment who have one common GOAL: Success of the journal as an international publication which meet the maximum scientific merits in terms of the works we publish.

We confirm our commitment to the academic excellence through research we publish at the JHEPALS which happens with the collaboration of globally recognized researchers, leaders, and policy-makers within the realm of HE Policy and Leadership.

Prof. Abbas Abbaspour
Dr. Ali Khorsandi Taskoh

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