

Winter 12-31-2024

The Emergence of Formalized Educational Leadership in Higher Education

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<https://doi.org/10.5206/cjsotlrcacea.2024.3.17715>

Recommended Citation

Symbaluk, D., Potter, T., Jackson, B., & Andrews, D. M. (2024). The emergence of formalized educational leadership in higher education. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 15(3).
<https://doi.org/10.5206/cjsotlrcacea.2024.3.17715>

The Emergence of Formalized Educational Leadership in Higher Education

Abstract

In Canada, educational leadership is a term often used to describe specific types of academic and scholarly work in universities, colleges, CEGEPs, other post-secondary institutions (and in K-12 contexts, where the term's usage is entirely distinct). Our interest is in how educational leadership is framed in the specific context of Canadian universities. While most universities recognize exemplary teachers through promotional criteria and often through awards, the academic literature provides little guidance on what exactly constitutes educational leadership in university settings. To trace the emergence of educational leadership as a formalized construct, we gathered data from Collective Agreements and other public-facing resources such as awards criteria from 48 Canadian universities to examine ways in which educational leadership was defined and/or enacted. Our national review identified several categories of activities commonly cited as examples of educational leadership, including significant forms of curricular development, formal leadership initiatives, the dissemination of public forms of teaching-related research or teaching-based resources, engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning, and the carrying out of various forms of mentorship. Our review also found that educational leadership is constituted not only by these types of activities, but also by the capacity to demonstrate impact of these activities beyond the classroom. In addition to examples of ways to illustrate impact, we offer a working definition of educational leadership that reflects how it is emerging within the specific context of contemporary Canadian universities.

Au Canada, le leadership pédagogique est un terme souvent utilisé pour décrire des types spécifiques de travaux universitaires et de recherche dans les universités, les collèges, les cégeps et d'autres établissements postsecondaires (et dans les contextes primaires et secondaires, où l'utilisation du terme est entièrement différente). Nous nous intéressons à la manière dont le leadership pédagogique est défini dans le contexte spécifique des universités canadiennes. Alors que la plupart des universités reconnaissent les enseignants exemplaires par le biais de critères de promotion et souvent par des prix, la littérature universitaire fournit peu d'indications sur ce qui constitue exactement le leadership pédagogique dans les milieux universitaires. Pour retracer l'émergence du leadership pédagogique en tant que construction formalisée, nous avons recueilli des données provenant de conventions collectives et d'autres ressources accessibles au public, comme les critères d'attribution de prix, auprès de 48 universités canadiennes afin d'examiner les façons dont le leadership pédagogique était défini et/ou mis en œuvre. Notre examen national a identifié plusieurs catégories d'activités couramment citées comme exemples de leadership pédagogique, notamment des formes importantes de développement de programmes, des initiatives formelles de leadership, la diffusion de formes publiques de recherche liée à l'enseignement ou de ressources fondées sur l'enseignement, l'engagement dans l'érudition de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage et la mise en œuvre de diverses formes de mentorat. Notre étude a également révélé que le leadership pédagogique ne se résume pas seulement à ce type d'activités, mais aussi à la capacité de démontrer l'impact de ces activités au-delà de la salle de classe. En plus d'exemples de façons d'illustrer l'impact, nous proposons une définition pratique du leadership pédagogique qui reflète la façon dont il émerge dans le contexte particulier des universités canadiennes contemporaines.

Keywords

educational leadership, awards criteria, tenure and promotion criteria, 3M National Teaching Fellowship; leadership pédagogique, critères de récompenses, critères de titularisation et de promotion, bourse nationale d'enseignement 3M

Cover Page Footnote

The authors wish to express their gratitude to Emma Metcalfe Hurst, Michael Fagbohun, and Syeda Hina Batool for their research assistance in locating awards criteria and collective agreement contract language on educational leadership. Funding for the research assistants was provided through a 3M National Teaching Program – cohort led teaching and learning grant.

What constitutes educational leadership is a topic of debate in Canadian universities as institutions revamp their criteria for demonstrating excellence in teaching, particularly in relation to the eligibility for awards, tenure, and promotion. As institutional criteria evolve, faculty members are also simultaneously striving to improve, develop professionally, and become leaders to serve as catalysts of change. This article traces the emergence of “educational leadership” (EL) as a descriptive and contractual umbrella term for a collection of initiatives, practices and fields of critical study. We seek to extend the findings from an earlier collaborative project involving the 3M 2020 National Teaching Fellowship cohort which highlighted the lack of clarity with which the term educational leadership is typically defined at a range of post-secondary institutions in Canada. Symbaluk et al. (2024) note that the sorts of teacher-scholars whose teaching is recognized with awards like the 3M National Teaching Fellowship and the forms of leadership they enact have always existed, but their educational leadership, in terms of who they are (traits) and what they have done (in practice), is less clear from a definitively measurable standpoint. This earlier project identified traits shared by recognized educational leaders (“innovation,” “responsiveness,” “reflectiveness,” “positive opportunism,” “persistence,” and “curiosity”) and documented common ways in which educational leadership was demonstrated through a range of practices (that were “community-engaged,” “trailblazing,” “bridge building,” “shared freely,” “action-oriented,” involved “applied methods,” and were enacted in advocacy toward greater causes) (Symbaluk et al., 2024).

Some disambiguation is needed from the beginning of our investigation of the emergence and growth of the concept of educational leadership within award criteria and tenure and promotion guidelines at Canadian universities. The term educational leadership as used in this context is distinct in scope and meaning from the usage in scholarship related to K-12 education, where the term is broadly associated with school administration and educational management in both Canadian and international contexts. There is a well-established body of existing scholarship on educational leadership in that context, including series such as the *Studies in Educational Leadership* and *Critical Studies in Educational Leadership, Management and Administration*, as well as both specialist (e.g., *Educational Leadership; Contemporary Issues in Educational Leadership; Educational Leadership and Management*) and generalist Education journals (e.g., *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*).

While educational leadership is becoming increasingly important as an umbrella term in Canadian universities for many of the expected contributions and practices engaged in by exemplary teachers, there is no standard definition of educational leadership in this context, and the literature is lacking on what does or does not constitute educational leadership in practice: how does an individual or a university distinguish teaching, administration, curriculum development, and educational research within a practice of educational leadership? This paper examines examples of instances of the term “educational leadership,” as well as its explicitly related practices, in a series of influential sites in Canadian universities: contracts and tenure criteria, research grants, national teaching awards, internal institutional teaching awards, and public-facing communications from resources such as centres for teaching and learning. We seek to help bridge the gaps in the literature and to provide some clarity within the current movement to formalize definitions of EL and modes of evidence of its impact.

Method

Our review undertakes an archival analysis of existing information on educational leadership gathered from collective agreements, awards criteria, centres for teaching and learning, and other publicly available resources pertaining to a sample of 48 Canadian universities as of January 1, 2023. Though post-secondary institutions extend far beyond universities into colleges, CEGEPs, First Nations and Indigenous Institutes, and private training institutions, the breadth of mission and practices in higher education in Canada necessitates beginning this conversation about post-secondary definitions of educational leadership in a narrowed frame in order to establish a foundation for future, wider conversation. The 48 Canadian universities in our review are those included in national rankings as identified by *Maclean's* magazine as part of its annual analysis of universities in Canada: included universities had more than 1000 full-time students, were members of the national association Universities Canada, and were not subject to special restrictions (e.g., based on religion or newly acquired status as a university) (Dwyer, 2023). Universities included in the *Maclean's* sample are ranked yearly based on 12 publicly available performance indicators related to faculty members such as teaching awards and research grants, students (e.g., academic awards), resources (e.g., operating budgets and library acquisitions), student supports, and overall reputation (Dwyer, 2023).

Maclean's divides universities in its assessments into three categories: those designated as medical/doctoral (i.e., University of Alberta, University of British Columbia, University of Calgary, Dalhousie University, Université de Laval, University of Manitoba, McGill University, McMaster University, Université de Montréal, University of Ottawa, Queen's University, University of Saskatchewan, Université de Sherbrooke, University of Toronto, and Western University), comprehensive (i.e., Brock University, Carleton University, Concordia University, University of Guelph, Memorial University, University of New Brunswick, Université de Québec à Montréal, University of Regina, Simon Fraser University, Toronto Metropolitan University, University of Victoria, University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, University of Windsor, and York University), and primarily undergraduate (i.e., Acadia University, Bishop's University, Brandon University, Cape Breton University, St. Francis Xavier University, Lakehead University, Laurentian University, University of Lethbridge, University of Moncton, Mount Allison University, Mount Saint Vincent University, Nipissing University, University of Northern British Columbia, Ontario Tech University, University of Prince Edwards Island, Saint Mary's University, St. Thomas University, Trent University, and University of Winnipeg). We searched publicly available websites such as those for centres for teaching and learning and publicly available documents including awards criteria and collective agreements at the 48 universities included in our sample to locate any reference to educational leadership. This review summarizes what we found for ways in which educational leadership was defined and/or used in the available public-facing information for our sample.

Findings

Educational Leadership as Defined in Contract Language

In terms of individual scholars, the highest impact site of definitions of EL is in language related to contracts, promotion, and tenure. While specific practices associated with EL (such as curriculum development and scholarly work on teaching and learning) have long been considered

more or less silently in such criteria, the expansion of increasingly formalized tenurable teaching-intensive faculty (TTFF) ranks in recent decades has not necessarily been accompanied by explicit articulations of the work and impacts of educational leadership as part of the criteria for tenure and promotion. To our knowledge, we are the first to review EL language within Collective Agreements at Canadian universities. Although we examined public-facing documents for 48 universities in Canada in our 2023 national review, we could only locate four that explicitly define EL within a Collective Agreement (i.e., University of British Columbia, Lakehead University, University of Toronto, and Western University). McGill University is not included in this count as it does not include a formal definition, but McGill University does include the term educational leadership in its Collective Agreement, with a list of ways in which it can be enacted within tenure and promotion processes.

With 358 appointments in a tenurable Teaching Professor track as of November 2023, (constituting some 12.5% of all tenurable appointments), the University of British Columbia (UBC), in many ways, spearheads the movement towards more teaching-focused faculty positions (UBC, 2024a; Symbaluk et al., 2024). In fact, UBC's leadership publishes a "Guide to Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure Procedures at UBC" that seeks to formally "summarize and supplement" for faculty, Department Heads, Deans, and the Senior Appointments Committee the Collective Agreement's expectations for promotion and tenure across ranks, including to the rank of Professor of Teaching and Associate Professor of Teaching, in what is termed the Educational Leadership stream. This guide includes further explanation of EL as a form of scholarship and descriptions of how EL can be demonstrated through various activities (UBC, 2023). The account of EL in UBC's Collective Agreement that this guide illuminates is itself the most substantive in Canada as it includes a separate definition along with multiple examples of what EL looks like in practice:

- a) Educational leadership is activity taken at UBC and elsewhere to advance innovation in teaching and learning with impact beyond one's classroom. Educational leadership includes but is not limited to such things as:
 - application of and/or active engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning;
 - significant contributions to curriculum development, curriculum renewal, course design, new assessment models, pedagogical innovation and other initiatives that extend beyond the member's classroom and advance the University's ability to excel in its teaching and learning mandates;
 - teaching, mentorship and inspiration of colleagues;
 - formal educational leadership responsibility within Department/ Program/ Faculty;
 - organization of and contributions to conferences, programs, symposia, workshops and other educational events on teaching and learning locally, nationally and internationally;
 - contributions to the theory and practice of teaching and learning, including publications such as textbooks, print and electronic publications, book chapters, articles in peer-reviewed and professional journals, conference proceedings, software, training guidelines, instructional manuals or other resources; and
 - other activities that support evidence-based educational excellence, leadership and impact within and beyond the University.

- b) Judgment of educational leadership is based mainly on the quality and significance of the individual's contributions (University of British Columbia Faculty Association, 2022, pp. 78-79).

This agreement provides an expansive, but specifically articulated range of activities through which one can demonstrate impactful practices of educational leadership. These activities are centred on significant forms of curriculum development and pedagogical innovation, as well as contributions to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). In addition, UBC points to the importance of mentorship as an element of EL, and to impacts stemming from formal leadership responsibilities. Moreover, UBC's description includes ways in which an educational leader can contribute to teaching-focused educational dissemination through conferences, workshops, and other educational events. Finally, UBC's framing of EL includes contributions to the theory and practice of teaching and learning. To support this research across both its campuses, UBC offers up to three million dollars annually in competitive research and innovation funding for investigations of teaching and learning through their Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (UBC, 2024b), Institute for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning's Linkage and Dissemination Grants (UBC, 2024c), Open Educational Resource Grants, and other programs specific to faculties like the Science Centre for Learning and Teaching's Skylight Development Grants (UBC, 2024d). There are also additional competitions for special initiatives like online learning projects and teaching and learning elements of the Indigenous Strategic Plan (UBC, 2024e). Among the other universities offering internal grants specifically for educational leadership work, the University of Calgary has a similar series of funding programs for EL research in its Development and Innovation Grants (up to \$10,000), SoTL Grants (up to \$40,000), and Educational Leadership Grants (up to \$40,000) (University of Calgary, 2024).

Lakehead University's Faculty Association (LUFA) Collective Agreement also lists EL as a requirement for teaching-focused faculty members. According to the LUFA Collective Agreement, "the responsibilities of Teaching-Focused faculty members at Lakehead University shall encompass an appropriate combination of teaching, educational leadership and administrative activities and/or service to the profession and community" (Lakehead University, 2020, p. 145). The LUFA Collective Agreement goes on to define educational leadership not with a separate statement like UBC, but through the use of the same extensive list of examples created by UBC, as quoted above (see Lakehead University, 2020, pp.145-146).

The University of Toronto's (2021) policy on promotions in the teaching stream includes a section titled "Attributes of Educational Leadership and/or Achievement and Ongoing Pedagogical/Professional Development" which states, "Sustained over many years, educational leadership and/or achievement is often reflected in teaching-related activities that show significant impact in a variety of ways, for example: through enhanced student learning; through creation and/or development of modes of effective teaching; through engagement in the scholarly conversation via pedagogical scholarship, or creative professional activity; through significant changes in policy related to teaching as a profession; [and] through technological and other advances in the delivery of education as a discipline or profession" (University of Toronto Governing Council, 2021, p. 4).

Western University also notes that for members in the "Teaching Scholar Track," scholarly performance is measured by "curriculum development and/or educational leadership and/or mentoring, presentations and scholarship on teaching or pedagogy, mentoring, or research into the efficacy of different pedagogical approaches. Impact of educational leadership and/or achievement

could be demonstrated through innovation of methods that enhance student learning; through creation and/or development of models of effective teaching; through advances in the delivery of education in a discipline or profession; through engagement in the scholarly conversation via professional activity and/or publications.” As part of the assessment, Western University also indicates that the written opinion of at least three external referees is sought and that, in addition to the candidate’s area of specialty, these individuals may comprise “experts in the scholarship of teaching and learning” (Western University, 2018, 200–201).

Finally, employment regulations at McGill University (2016) pertaining to tenure track and tenured academic staff also include in its “Guidelines for Developing a Teaching Portfolio,” under a section titled “Teaching development and educational leadership,” several practices that may be “undertaken to develop and enhance teaching, particularly in the broader context.” Similar to examples of educational leadership used at UBC and Lakehead, McGill’s list includes:

- development and sharing of teaching innovations, materials or strategies;
- advising and mentoring colleagues about teaching-related issues;
- TA mentoring (unless this is included under ‘Other contributions’ in the dossier);
- contributions through teaching support units, teaching committees, associations;
- organizing or facilitating seminars, workshops or conferences on teaching and learning;
- contributions to the development of policies on teaching and learning; [and]
- teaching related publications – both discipline-specific and general (McGill University, 2016, p. 21).

Other institutions also include EL as a requirement for promotion and tenure within their teaching- and/or research-intensive streams, but do not define EL within their Collective Agreements and/or provide less guidance on what the work category entails (e.g., Brock University, Simon Fraser University, and the University of Victoria). For instance, Simon Fraser University refers to EL as a criterion for tenure and promotion for lecturers, senior lecturers, and university lecturers and notes that “a university lecturer will have responsibilities that encompass the normal requirements of classroom teaching plus activities in the area of education leadership, teaching mentorship, and curriculum development. University lecturers will focus on accomplishments in teaching and educational innovation and the impact on student learning” (Simon Fraser University, 2024, p. 58).

Given its legal function, contract language is limited in the degree to which it can be inclusive, flexible, or contextual, and thus provides only one part of the data that can be developed into a sense of a national definition of EL. To consider the full extent of the conversation around EL as a concept, other forms of national and institutional communications on EL must be added.

Educational Leadership as Defined in Canada’s National Teaching Award

National recognition of the sort conferred by a 3M National Teaching Fellowship is another notable impetus in the emergence of formalized definitions of EL. Canada’s Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE) is committed to the improvement of higher education in Canada through the dissemination and sharing of educational ideas and resources (STLHE, 2024a, Resources section). The organization publishes scholarship on teaching and learning, hosts a national conference, and provides a series of grants and awards for individuals and teams that include faculty members, graduate students, undergraduates, and teaching and learning staff

specialists. However, it is most widely recognized for awards based on exemplary contributions to teaching and learning in higher education: the 3M National Teaching Fellowship (3MNTF) and 3M National Student Fellowship (3MNSF) (STLHE, 2024b, Awards section).

Created in 1985, the 3MNTF is Canada's only national teaching award, awarded to up to ten post-secondary teachers each year. Consequently, it is recognized among teachers, educational developers, and senior administration as having a variety of positive impacts on recipients (personally and professionally), other faculty members, students, centres of teaching and learning, and award-winners' affiliated post-secondary institutions more broadly (e.g., see Stockley et al., 2019; Acai et al., 2018). The award's criteria have long had a dual emphasis on excellence in teaching *and* leadership in teaching (Ahmad et al., 2013). The high-profile status of the award (announced each year in a national general readership magazine *Maclean's*), and the national impact of STLHE as an organization, grants weight to the way in which STLHE defines the profession and its roles.

From its inception, up to and including 2019, nominees were required to submit a dossier to illustrate traits and practices that comprise their teaching excellence and their educational leadership—weighted equally in the adjudication process. Award committees were then challenged to discern from among the nominees in different disciplines and working in different institutional infrastructures a cohort of the best. This process necessitated fuller criteria, including a focus on innovation. As Acai et al. (2018) eloquently put it:

The high standard of the fellowship is also reflected in the criteria that define what counts as evidence of teaching excellence and educational leadership. These criteria have evolved over the years so they represent not only a checklist that nominators can tick off, but also a compelling story about a teacher who is deserving of the highest honour a national recognition can bestow. As mentioned in one of the program artefacts, an essay written by the 3M Program Coordinator in 2008, the selection committee was challenged by the fact that most of the nominees met the stated criteria, which led to the development of “meta” criteria that helped to further differentiate candidates with attributes such as, “creative, authentic, fresh, genuine, authoritative, super energetic, captivating, convincing, versatile, different, innovative, path-finding, way-breaking, pioneering, passionate, transformational, and deep!” (p.61).

From 2020, the STLHE/3M revised criteria included an equal emphasis on teaching excellence, educational leadership, and innovation. One challenge in articulating a broadly applicable definition of educational leadership is differentiating EL from both administration and exceptional teaching, a process that depends on the distinction and overlap in definitions. For STLHE, teaching excellence centres on classroom practice: “the intentional actions of an instructor to create an exceptional learning environment through engaging in pedagogical practices designed to maximize student learning. Excellent teachers engage in inclusive practices, scholarly teaching and ongoing reflection of their own teaching practice” (STLHE, 2024c, The Criteria section).

In contrast, educational leadership functions at a broader level and “involves leading significant transformation in teaching and learning at an institutional, disciplinary, community, and/or societal level. Educational leadership fosters and supports change, and leads to a more inclusive, equitable, and diverse post-secondary landscape” (STLHE, 2024c, The Criteria section). This definition of EL denotes what a leader *does*, with emphasis on that person being a key catalyst for transformation and change at multiple levels. In a chapter on the history and origins of the

3MNTF, Ahmad et al. (2013) state: “Examples of leadership evidence include the candidate’s statement of what leadership in teaching excellence means and how it is accomplished; this is supported by actual contributions including workshops on teaching and learning, mentorship, research on teaching, and impact on educational development with the institution and beyond” (p. 184).

STLHE’s definitions of teaching excellence and educational leadership are distinctive in the creation of “innovation” as a third criterion, removing innovation from the umbrella of EL and shifting it into its own category, weighted equally with the other two: “the novel execution of ideas that contribute to more effective teaching and learning practices. The result of educational innovation impacts people in academia and beyond to reach mutual goals” (STLHE, 2024c, The Criteria section). In our earlier research on educational leadership in traits and practices among the 2020 3MNTF cohort, innovation was the most prevalent theme identified in the EL dossiers: at a time when innovation was not a separate part of the award criteria, there were 84 identifiable examples of innovation amongst the cohort (Symbaluk et al., 2024). Whether innovation is a sub-category of EL or is included in a separate parallel category, as in the current 3MNTF criteria, there is an emphasis in certain definitions on novel teaching strategies and educational contributions that “impact people in academia and beyond.”

Educational Leadership as Defined in Internal Teaching Award Criteria

Another source of data in an emerging definition of educational leadership is the public-facing criteria for teaching awards within Canadian universities, often described and administered through centres for teaching and learning. Internal teaching awards are a common means through which exemplary teachers are evaluated and recognized at post-secondary institutions (Carusetta, 2001). As evidence of the impact of STLHE’s definition, a few institutions have directly adopted the 3MNTF criteria as their own (Stockley et al., 2019). For example, the criteria for the University of Toronto’s University Teaching Award are arranged under the same framing of educational leadership, teaching excellence, and educational innovation, incorporating much of the STLHE language into its criteria (University of Toronto, 2024). Brock University’s Distinguished Teaching Award was also defined using these three categories when we did our analysis in 2023, but the university has recently revised their criteria to singularly emphasize teaching excellence (Brock University, 2024).

Extending STLHE’s general conception of “significant transformation in teaching and learning,” the University of Guelph’s (2024) John Bell Award recognizes “outstanding educational leadership,” demonstrated both within and beyond the University through:

- evidence of outstanding contributions in course and curriculum design including the development and assessment of learning outcomes or curriculum improvement processes;
- evidence of outstanding contributions to pedagogical innovations including the development of high-impact practices;
- substantial evidence of contributions to the scholarship of teaching and learning (University of Guelph, 2024, Eligibility and Criteria section).

Here, faculty members are provided with a little more direction as to how they might bring about change in the form of “outstanding contributions” to curriculum, pedagogy, and/or the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Memorial University's President's Award for Distinguished Teaching also points to expected contributions by the educational leader based on "a continued record of excellence in teaching" where the nominee provides evidence of "outstanding achievement in teaching and engagement in educational leadership and the scholarship of teaching and learning." To fulfill the educational leadership component:

The nominee will have made a significant contribution to practices, policies, or processes that enhance teaching effectiveness, the quality of student learning experiences, and/or teaching and learning environments. The nominee will have undertaken a variety of roles, such as advocate, mentor, facilitator of teaching development opportunities, member of committee or working groups, and leader of special initiatives. The ability to inspire, engage and support colleagues in their teaching development will be evident. Leadership roles and activities may have been undertaken while in a formal leadership position or beyond appointed roles and responsibilities, and will have impact at the department, faculty, or institutional level and, perhaps, beyond. (Memorial University, 2022, p. 2).

The University of Victoria's Harry Kickman Alumni Award for Excellence in Teaching and Educational Leadership is unique in its inclusion of "Educational Leadership" in its title, as well as in its criteria. In this award, a leader is an innovative, student-centred instructor (teaching) who also enacts practices and processes that have an impact both within and beyond the institution (educational leadership). Specifically, a successful candidate:

- promotes student-centred learning in practices that actively engage students in the learning process and are focused on learning and mentoring beyond the classroom.
- creatively enhances teaching by including innovative teaching methods and learning strategies, effective assignment development, incorporation of educational technologies and providing formative assessment.
- provides innovative course design/redesign and engagement in curriculum development and is actively engaged in scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) research, collaborating with peers, students and TAs.
- is an educational leader within and beyond the university, involved in activities such as: participating in learning and teaching related committees or presentations, serving as a consultant on government policy bodies, writing media reviews or articles, publishing in academic journals or obtaining grants for teaching and learning research (University of Victoria, 2024a, Awards Criteria section).

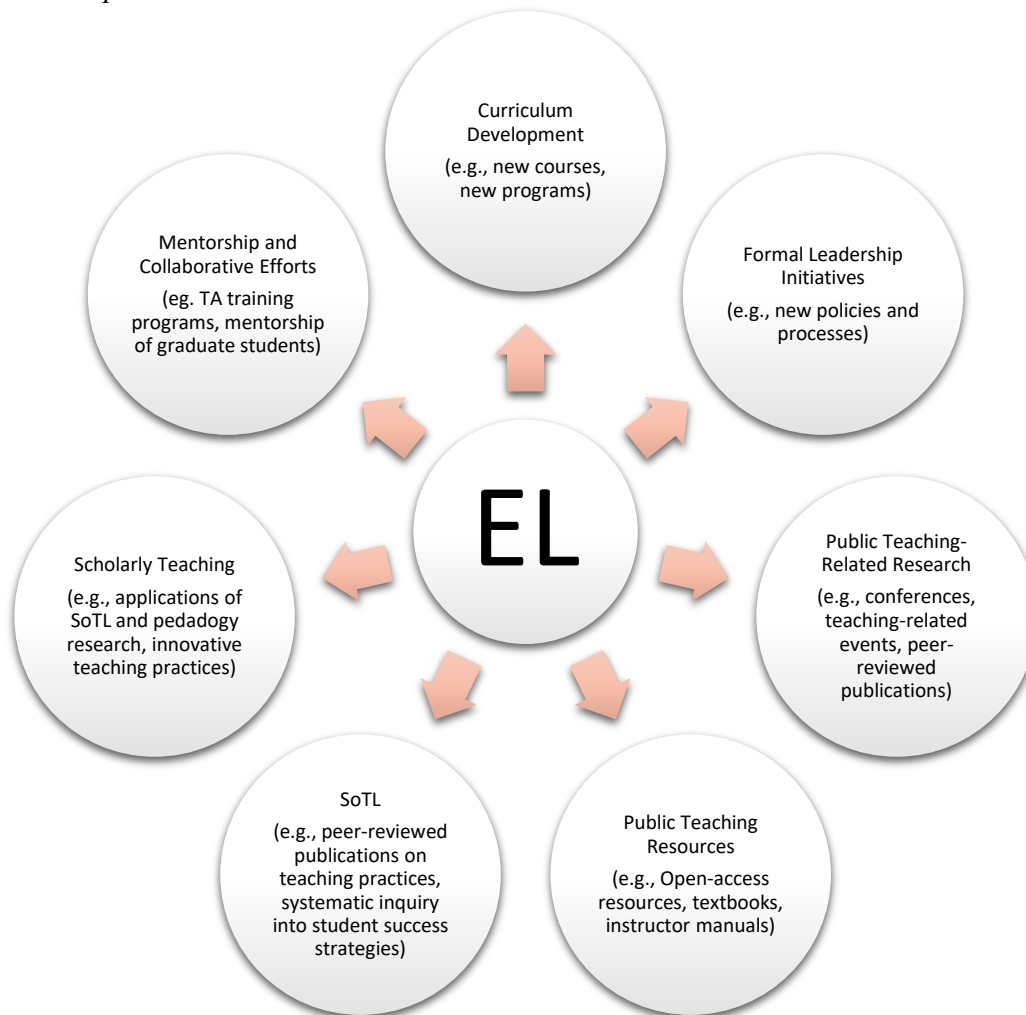
The University of Windsor goes further still, with an award that is exclusively the "Educational Leadership Award." It "honours the contributions of individuals who have led significant and sustained initiatives to improve teaching, curriculum, teaching spaces and resources, and policies and procedures that promote effective teaching. Each of these areas of leadership is likely to involve the establishment and fostering of strong collaborative networks among educators and educational leaders, at the University of Windsor and beyond" (University of Windsor, 2024). The University of Windsor criteria's emphasis on the importance of "sustained" contributions is, we believe, unique among the award descriptions, though it echoes the use of the term in the University of Toronto's collective agreement. The description also includes a plethora

of examples that illustrate the kinds of achievements an educational leader might have, many of which are now identifiable as recurring in examples from across Canada:

- made direct contributions to improving the quality of education our students experience, beyond the context of their own classrooms;
- developed new and effective curricula, programs, or courses;
- successfully established institutional infrastructure to facilitate effective teaching and learning and its implementation (e.g., new technologies, new learning spaces, etc.);
- engaged in or led collaborative efforts leading to innovation in teaching approaches, pedagogical materials development, and assessment of student learning;
- inspired teaching improvement in others (including other faculty members, administrators, graduate students, and teaching assistants) through collegial support, mentorship, professional development leadership, teaching resource development, and other systematic efforts;
- actively sought to improve teaching and learning networks and to expand collaborations within and across institutional units, either academic or administrative;
- organized or played another leadership role in workshops, symposia, courses, or conferences on university education;
- led or made major and identifiable contributions to the creation or improvement of institutional policies related to teaching and learning (e.g., teaching evaluation, promotion and tenure guidelines, academic advising, accessibility, and inclusion);
- functioned in systematic ways as advocates for the value of teaching and learning in post-secondary contexts;
- engaged in community outreach activities that involve teaching (e.g., leading international educational support initiatives, undertaking media advocacy for the value of teaching and learning in universities or at the University of Windsor);
- led or made major contributions to inter-institutional initiatives related to teaching and learning or to learning environments;
- contributed to the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) beyond the University of Windsor;
- served in leadership roles on regional, national or international organizations dedicated to teaching of a disciplinary or general focus (University of Windsor, 2024, Educational Leadership Award Purpose section).

Since awards are often a precursor to promotion, their criteria serve an essential function in working toward a nationally understood definition of educational leadership. From the review of the sources outlined above, Figure 1 summarizes current elements of definitions of educational leadership in Canadian universities:

Figure 1
Activities that Comprise EL



Seeking Further Clarity: What is and is not “Educational Leadership” in Canadian Practice

Based on the language provided in collective agreements, criteria for tenure and promotion, and awards, educational leadership is most often defined as “significant” activities or contributions that extend beyond what is expected from regular teaching roles and service obligations. A key challenge in both tenure and awards situations is to articulate where any given activity might fall on a continuum between service/administration and EL, or between teaching and EL.

One of the most commonly cited examples of what constitutes EL is a major contribution to curricular development. In this capacity, educational leaders might spearhead new courses as noted earlier, at the Department level, or by establishing new majors or minors. But they also might play a key role in the development of new programs at the Faculty level, for example, or work to enact change at the level of the institution by helping to revise degree requirements. Curricular work might even extend beyond the institution through interdisciplinary, provincial, or national initiatives such as accreditations. While most instructional faculty members reflect on curriculum in an ongoing way through the creation and updating of materials they use in their courses, current

educational leadership language often stipulates impact beyond one's own classroom to differentiate teaching from EL. As such, significant forms of curriculum development that are typically shared with, or impact other instructors, would constitute educational leadership. An example of this would be someone designing a novel approach to teaching that was then widely adopted throughout an academic unit or outside of one's own institution.

Mentorship is similarly consistently listed in the sources we reviewed as a form of educational leadership. Educational leaders share their successful strategies or novel ideas with their students, their colleagues, and the wider academic community. Mentorship involving students might entail supervision of undergraduate or graduate research projects or the training and mentoring of teaching assistants. Mentorship of colleagues could include sharing resources or advising faculty members about teaching-related issues. Educational leaders also facilitate educational events by planning and hosting conferences, preparing workshops, and facilitating events in collaboration with centres for teaching and learning.

Two other aspects of educational leadership that are more complicated in their function, and which occur in definitions of educational leadership, are scholarship of teaching and learning and the concept of innovation. Engagement in SoTL is one of the most frequently recognized means by which educational leadership is illustrated in practice. Potter and Kustra (2011) define SoTL as “the systematic study of teaching and learning, using established or validated criteria of scholarship, to understand how teaching (beliefs, behaviours, attitudes, and values) can maximize learning, and/or develop a more accurate understanding of learning, resulting in products that are publicly shared for critique and use by an appropriate community” (p. 2). Common examples of engagement in SoTL include formal investigation and analysis of the impact of a teaching method, a curricular framework, a learning technology, or a university policy related to teaching and learning, disseminated through conference presentations or peer-reviewed publications.

One challenge to address is the slippage that is sometimes noted between SoTL and EL; some have complained that SoTL, educational development, and educational leadership are becoming blurred in a way that is a “thorn in the flesh of educational research” and damaging to educational research (Canning & Masika, 2022, p. 1084). However we might think of the impact of a misconception, there can indeed be a misconception that SoTL scholarship *is* EL, and EL *is* SoTL, to the exclusion of the other criteria we have documented here: the slippage needs to be addressed. In fact, the Canadian universities' definitions of EL that we examined are consistent in the recognition that EL and its impact may be demonstrated in many documentable ways, only one of which is peer-reviewed publication of work connected to previous literature. As noted herein, there are myriad ways in which faculty members might contribute to teaching and learning in higher education, including forms of research and publication that would technically fall outside of the realm of SoTL by most of its definitions. Creating and disseminating learning materials that facilitate teaching by others is an important part of EL, for example: authoring a textbook as an expert in a discipline, creating an instructor manual to mentor others in one's discipline, or developing software to facilitate teaching courses or skills in a novel way, would all likely have an impact beyond one's classroom, and be considered forms of EL. Nevertheless, even the published parts of these kinds of work, if they are not assessment-based research, might not technically fall under the umbrella of SoTL. Similarly, disciplinary discovery research not related to teaching and learning would fall under neither EL nor SoTL, even when completed by scholars in teaching-based employment ranks.

Lastly, the question of innovation needs to be addressed. The term appears in some award criteria and definitions as described above, and is granted status outside of, but equal to,

educational leadership in the 3M criteria. Still, it is clear from our review that innovation is one of the ways in which EL may be demonstrated, but it is not in and of itself an essential criterion for EL, nor is it of its core. For example, mentorship is by definition the sharing of experience and disciplinary or institutional knowledge and need not meet a standard of “innovation” to have impact. Similarly, a leader may lead workshops or publish about effective teaching practices and student success strategies that are based on well-developed research methods and scholarly literature: clearly impactful but not by definition innovative. See Table 1 for an overview of how and whether innovation is described in relation to EL within Collective Agreements and awards criteria at the institutions mentioned earlier.

Table 1
Innovation as a Criterion for Educational Leadership

Institution	Source	Examples
Brock University	Distinguished Teaching Award	Included separate criteria for EL, teaching excellence, and innovation until its revision in 2024. EL is no longer listed and educational innovation is now optionally included within teaching excellence (Brock University, 2024).
Lakehead University	Collective Agreement	EL listed alongside teaching and administrative forms of service (see Lakehead University, 2020, p. 145). No mention of innovation.
McGill University	Collective Agreement	EL defined as practices including, as one example, the “development and sharing of teaching innovations, materials or strategies” (McGill University, 2016, p. 21).
Memorial University	President’s Award for Distinguished Teaching	No mention of innovation in examples of the EL component (Memorial University, 2022).
University of British Columbia	Collective Agreement	EL defined as “activity” to “advance innovation in teaching and learning with impact beyond the classroom” (University of British Columbia Faculty Association, 2022, p. 78).
University of Guelph	John Bell Award	Includes “pedagogical innovation” as an example of EL (University of Guelph, 2024).

Institution	Source	Examples
University of Toronto	Collective Agreement	EL reflected “in teaching-related activities that show significant impact in a variety of ways” (University of Toronto Governing Council, 2021, p. 4). No mention of innovation.
University of Toronto	President’s Teaching Award	Treats EL and innovation as parallel criteria for excellence “demonstrated through a sustained commitment to educational leadership, teaching excellence, and educational innovation” (University of Toronto, 2024).
University of Victoria	Harry Kickman Alumni Award for Excellence in Teaching and Educational Leadership	“A leader is an innovative, student-centered, instructor.” “Creatively enhances teaching by including innovative teaching methods...” (University of Victoria, 2024a).
University of Windsor	Educational Leadership Award	EL award based on “sustained initiatives.” Includes as one example, “engaged in or led collaborative efforts leading to innovation in teaching approaches” (University of Windsor, 2024).
Western University	Collective Agreement	EL listed among performance measures. Various impacts including as one example, “innovation of methods that enhance student learning” (Western University, 2018, p. 201).

In addition to the clarification needed to the functions of innovation and SoTL in the usage of the term educational leadership in Canadian universities, other examples may help to illuminate the distinctions between teaching and EL or service and EL. Creating content for or designing or revising one’s own courses and using pedagogical skills to deliver them to one’s own students contributes to one’s own excellent teaching, but it is not considered to be EL in the resources we examined, as the impact is contained to one’s own students in one’s own classroom. However, designing a new standardized course that will be taught by several instructors, or mentoring a team of colleagues teaching that course for the first time, would be EL under most definitions. Similarly,

imagining a new course, pitching it to one's department, and shepherding it through curriculum processes so that it can appear in the Calendar as a permanent contribution to the department's curriculum would typically be understood as EL. Developing and publishing or disseminating innovative methods for teaching subject matter within a discipline at conferences or symposia would typically be considered EL, as would convening and leading such teaching-related events. However, blogging, YouTubing, posting to social media, or other non-peer-reviewed online conversations—while often fruitful—would not necessarily qualify as formal EL, just as posting about one's discovery research is valuable, but would not typically count toward tenure (even though it might meet the criteria of certain kinds of awards if public outreach is required).

With respect to service, completing student-facing work that is a part of an administrative role (scheduling, registration, advising) would typically be service, but researching or undertaking formal processes to make evidence-based changes to practices or frameworks might fall into what STLHE calls “leading significant transformation in teaching and learning at an institutional [or] disciplinary...level” (STLHE 2024c, The Criteria). Similarly, sitting on a committee to adjudicate internal teaching awards would be service, but it could be EL to be involved in the reflective process to articulate the institution's values around teaching for a new award, or to serve as the inaugural chair of a committee developing a policy and laying the groundwork for new activities that support teaching and learning.

Measuring the Impact of Educational Leadership

Once individuals and institutions have considered the kinds of distinctions noted above in coming to terms with their agreed understandings of educational leadership, there is a need to reflect upon ways to document and assess this kind of work for promotion or awards. To trace the emergence of the ideas and language of educational leadership, our brief review highlights not only practices and processes that EL encompasses, but also the important challenge of demonstrating the impact of educational leadership activities and initiatives. Faculty members are increasingly being required to demonstrate not only that they have enacted forms of EL, but also that these activities have had some kind of impact beyond the classroom (e.g., on their departments, on other faculty members, on schools and faculties, on their institutions, on their professional disciplines, and even at the level of society). As a nominee for an award or a faculty member seeking tenure or promotion, documenting impactful EL can be a daunting task, particularly if their institution does not provide a definition of EL or refers generally to only a few of the many activities that constitute EL. For instance, Memorial University's President's Award for Distinguished Teaching includes as examples for demonstrating the impact of EL: “letters of support that speak to the nominee's educational leadership contributions and impact; descriptions of contributions to teaching and learning related committees, working groups, or task forces; and media coverage related to teaching and learning initiatives the nominee has led” (Memorial University, 2022, p.2).

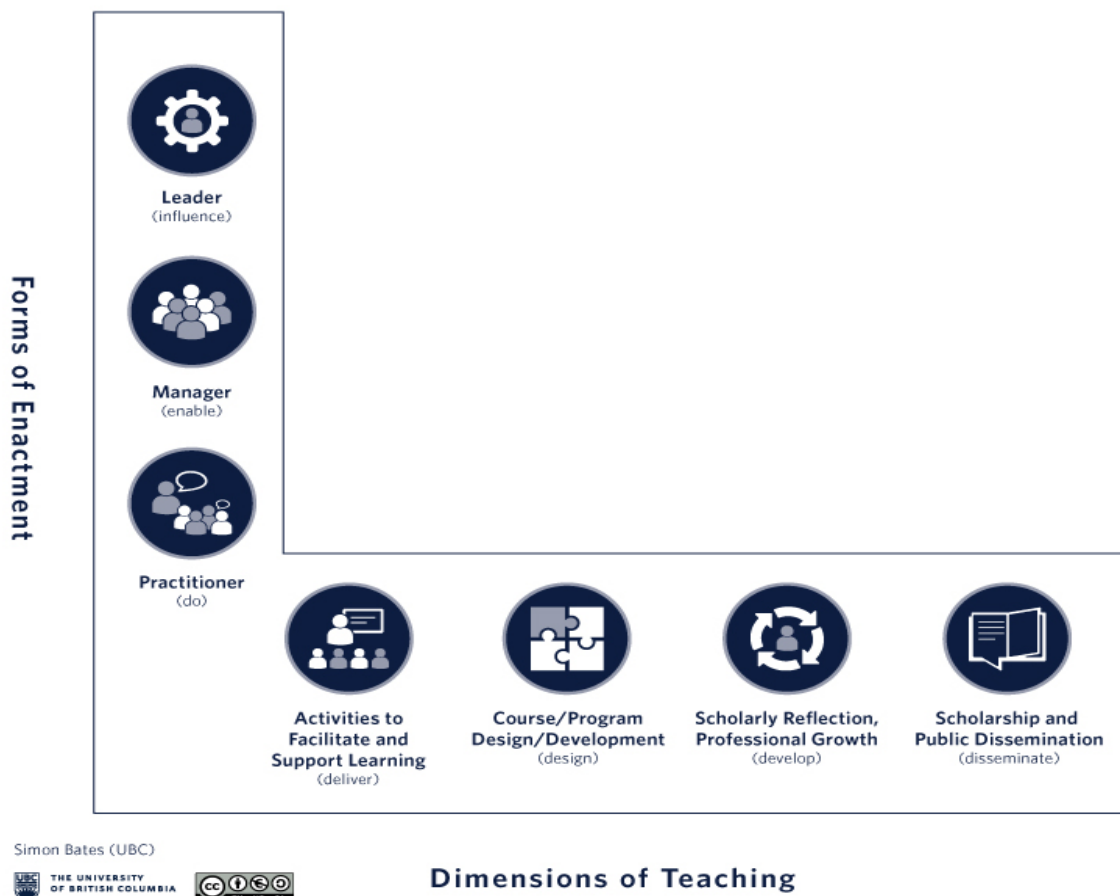
The most substantial investigation into the measurable impact of EL is a discussion paper by Welsh et al. (2018), which seeks to support faculty members going forward for promotion and tenure. They provide specific examples of activities undertaken by instructors in the Faculty of Science at the University of British Columbia that do and do not constitute educational leadership based on their “scope of impact” under UBC's terms of collective agreement (Welsh et al., 2018). In one sample case discussed, an instructor created an online teaching package of case studies for illustrating key concepts in biology. This example is considered educational leadership because it

shows evidence of impact on practice (re: the development of an instructor guide that enables others to make use of case studies in the teaching of biology), impact on student success (re: improved student engagement with course materials), and even impact on other instructors (who benefit from using case studies in their courses with their students) (Welsh et al., 2018, p. 11). Conversely, they argue that an organized series of math and engineering lectures for high school students would be considered “meaningful service” but not educational leadership because this activity encourages students to pursue STEM in high school and be qualified applicants to university. It is not educational leadership, as defined by the Collective Agreement, since the impact of the educational leaders’ activity does not extend beyond this lecture series, which in this case, would be considered the instructor’s ‘classroom.’ “To be considered educational leadership, the course design model of involving the community in the course’s development and evaluation would need to be published and/or adopted by other educators” (Welsh et al., p.18).

A second resource that helps to guide us on how to demonstrate and validate the impact of educational leadership work comes in the form of centres for teaching and learning. For example, the University of Victoria’s Faculty Institute of Teaching (FIT) offers an STLHE-accredited three-part program for faculty members on multiple aspects of teaching: Research-informed course design principles (FIT 1), discovery research and related teaching (FIT 2), and a program focusing on educational leadership (FIT 3). FIT 3 is designed to help faculty members understand, through a variety of means such as readings and guest presentations, what EL is and what it looks like in practice “at the local, national, and international level” (University of Victoria, 2024b). For instance, some of the authors designed and led a workshop as a guest presentation for FIT 3 to explain the ways in which EL is manifested in the practices of teacher-scholars recognized by 3M for work in the field, including curricular projects, published teaching materials (e.g., textbooks, teaching guides, and open access resources), and innovative capacity building (e.g., through collaborative efforts, mentoring colleagues, and supervising graduate and undergraduate students) (Symbaluk et al., 2022).

The University of British Columbia’s Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology (CTLT) has the most comprehensive resources we have found to date in Canada on educational leadership and its assessment. In addition to a definition, examples, and an overview of how the teaching ranks are established through EL, there are other tools to assist faculty members in understanding EL and for documenting EL in practice. One key resource, the Educational Leadership Mapping (ELM) tool, provides a process for reflecting upon and illustrating various dimensions of EL within components of teaching (see Figure 2) and locating individual activities as practitioner (in one’s own teaching), manager (administrative), and leader (influencing beyond one’s own scope of practice). UBC recommends using this tool as the first phase of a reflection on educational leadership: the “ELM helps you specify your activities across dimensions of teaching (delivery, design, professional development and dissemination) and levels of enactment (what the individual does, what is enabled, what is changed / led by the individual)” (UBC, 2024f).

Figure 2
Educational Leadership Mapping Tool (UBC)



UBC's CTLT also provides a Teaching and Learning Impact Framework (TLIF) to assist faculty members in describing and portraying their EL accomplishments in terms of their corresponding impact. Evidence for EL is framed as having an impact on "people," "process" and/or "product" (UBC, 2024g). Impacts on people can be related to "practice" (where there is a creation and dissemination of resources that assist individuals or departments) or they can include more direct impacts on "students" (e.g., through enhanced engagement and learning). Impacts on process include "approaches and priorities," where initiatives support programs, schools/ faculties, and institutional goals or they take the form of "support" directed at capacity building (e.g., workshops, training programs). The impact of EL work on product is evident through "curriculum" efforts such as the development of new courses and modes of delivery, or via "literature" where EL efforts are disseminated through various forms of presentations and publications (UBC, 2024g). The TLIF identifies "tangible outputs" as:

- What new learning opportunities / teaching materials / courses / programs / assessment strategies did a particular activity create?

- What does the individual / their colleagues / the Department / the institution / colleagues beyond the institution now do differently as a result of the activity?
- What supports, resources, events, workshops, capacities / partnerships now exist as a result of the activity?
- What publications, conference proceedings / presentations or other dissemination or knowledge mobilization mechanisms now exist as a result of the activity? (UBC, 2024g).

Finally, the TLIF document provides a useful starting point for finding sites of evidence for impact:

- Quantitative data, e.g. number of participants, performance or other measures of learning, enrollments, degree pathways, placements, views, users, purchasers, citations and impact factors.
- Qualitative data, e.g. course / program evaluations of effectiveness through student surveys, analysis of writing activities, focus group, interviews.
- Awards, Recognition and Distinctions in the area of teaching and learning (e.g. UBC Killam Teaching Awards, Department / Faculty teaching awards, external Fellowships, 3M National Teaching Fellowship).
- Student evaluations of teaching (quantitative and qualitative data).
- Evidence of impact on students (reflective e-mails, social media).
- Evidence of impact on other colleagues, Departments, institutions (emails, letters, communications indicating adoption of practices, materials, designs, assessments etc.).
- Materials, activities or feedback from workshops, panels, conferences, invited presentations, networks, communities of practice.
- Publications, proceedings, podcasts, digital artifacts and media articles.
- Grants and awards for development and enhancement. (UBC, 2024g).

These frameworks are by far the most detailed in the Canadian post-secondary landscape. We cite them here at length to facilitate further conversation about educational leadership and to help formalize the definition and assessment of educational leadership in Canadian universities.

Conclusion and Unifying Definition of Educational Leadership

Site-specific discussions on the nature and definitions of EL are ongoing, and while there are many consistencies, not all are moving in identical directions. As we document above, many institutions and programs are closely aligned in many areas, though the function of SoTL as a category and the question of innovation as a defining element are sites of some inconsistency within the timeline described by this work. The specific phrase *educational leadership* is present in several of the collective agreements for Canadian universities, and language around the work it represents is even more common. Our goals with this analysis are to provide a 2023 snapshot of how educational leadership is articulated in Canada, and to spark a conversation about EL, how it is defined, and what it means within the Canadian university context, by way of their institutional, contractual, and scholarly practices, as well as in terms of its role in expanding function in definitions of award-worthy teaching.

Among existing definitions of EL, the University of British Columbia has laid the most groundwork, providing examples of activities that demonstrate EL in practice, and formalizing it

within contract language and awards criteria. It also has a plethora of supporting resources for categorizing and assessing the impact of EL. Recall UBC's core definition: "Educational leadership is activity taken at UBC and elsewhere to advance innovation in teaching and learning with impact beyond one's classroom." Its impact is clear in that other institutions, such as Lakehead University, have incorporated sections of UBC's definition into their own collective agreements. It may be that we do not see EL consistently defined in other ways because UBC was the first to use terms like "impact beyond the classroom" and to formally define "educational leadership" and its assessment in contractual terms (see UBC, 2014, pp. 65–66). The general outline of this definition helps universities to enable recognition and facilitation of a wide range of activities reflective of different disciplinary practices.

Two influential existing definitions, STLHE's and UBC's, foreground the concept of innovation. We suggest recognizing the influence of these definitions but changing the language of innovation to a language of advancement to acknowledge that educational leaders may use innovative means, such as newly developed pedagogies, but they may also use other means such as tried and true practices and research on teaching, to advance excellence in teaching with lasting impact. Advancement may include innovation, but it encompasses a broader set of impacts that more fully represent the range of definitions and criteria that we have documented in the Canadian context. Hence, as we look ahead to considerations and reconsiderations of this emerging criterion for promotion, tenure, and awards in Canadian universities, we recommend a working definition of EL as follows: *Educational leadership consists of research and practice-based activities undertaken to advance knowledge and excellence in teaching and learning, as measured through lasting impact beyond one's own classroom. Such activities may, but need not, include engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), dissemination of teaching-related research, the development of teaching-based resources, scholarly teaching practices, various forms of mentorship, significant forms of curriculum development, and formal leadership initiatives. Educational leadership work may be disseminated in various ways, but need not extend to formal publication.* While this definition can be used as a unifying framework for articulating what is and is not currently considered educational leadership at the Canadian universities in our sample, additional research is needed to determine if the term "educational leadership" and its affiliated activities are included in criteria for tenure, promotion, and/or teaching-based awards at universities and other types of Canadian post-secondary institutions outside of the scope of *Maclean's rankings*.

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