Leadership Behaviour and Effectiveness of Academic Program Directors in Australian Universities

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on leadership behaviour and effectiveness of university Academic Program Directors who have responsibility for managing a program or course[1] of study. The leadership capabilities were assessed using the Integrated Competing Values Framework as its theoretical foundation. Data from 90 Academic Program Directors and 710 Significant Others within four Australian Universities were analysed. The results lead to the conclusions that these Academic Program Directors were reasonably effective and had the ability to implement and further develop their leadership capabilities, even though they had no formal authority. In their role, these Directors mainly focused on 'getting the job done' and 'working with people'. At the same time, they placed less emphasis on monitoring their programs, maintaining networks and introducing changes, thereby putting their programs at risk.

KEYWORDS: *Integrated Competing Values Framework, effectiveness, leadership, management development*

Introduction

Higher education has undergone momentous changes over the past ten years. These changes have been driven by governments seeking greater accountability for learning and research outcomes, employers wanting more 'work ready' graduates, an increasingly consumer-

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[1] The word 'program' will be used throughout the reminder of the paper to refer to both program and courses: depending on the terminology used in various Universities.

oriented and diverse student population, and the need to keep up with technological changes in educational delivery. Neither the pace nor scope of changes is likely to abate in the near future and the Bradley Review recommendations in Australia would support this claim (Bradley et al., 2008). Some of the recommendations that have emerged from this review include increasing access and outcomes for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, rewarding institutions for agreed upon quality and equity targets in teaching and learning and increasing resources for research and world-class tertiary education infrastructure.

All of these changes, which are not necessarily unique to Australia, have consequences for leadership by Academic Program Directors (APDs). These university staff work at the frontline of universities as they have responsibility for the delivery of programs to the student population. The role of the APD is one of linking the School/Department and the instructional staff to students. They could be considered a strategic 'linking pin', as defined by Likert (1961). These APDs are a strategic asset to the university, especially in times of change (Balogun, 2003), as they have a key role to play in the delivery of high quality teaching programs and positive learning outcomes for students.

In addition, Bush (2008) notes that leadership has become a much more critical component of administrative positions (such as the role of the APDs) in higher education over the past 20 years, which previously had a predominant focus on management[2]. He further posits that leadership of learning through more collective or distributive approaches to leadership has increased.

In this paper, academic leadership broadly is considered. The authors accept Kotter's (1990) view that "Leadership complements management: it doesn't replace it" (p. 103). With the focus being on Academic Leadership , the authors have used a behaviourally-based leadership approach using the 'Integrated Competing Values Framework' (ICVF), to

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[2] Note: the focus of this paper is on the leadership component of the APD's role and does not address the administrative or management aspects.

investigate the critical leadership role of the APD in Universities. Their performance is measured against this model (using a 360° feedback process) to provide information to the higher education sector on the leadership behaviour and developmental needs of this important staff member.

Academic Leadership

While much research on leadership (broadly) has been reported in the business literature, the body of work on *academic* leadership, specifically, is much smaller (Ramsden, 1998; Ramsden et al., 2007; Sternberg, 2005). Some of the more recent work on leadership within the university context that has been reported has focused on Heads of Schools (and those senior managers above them) who have authority and power as a result of their formalised role(s) (Askling and Stensaker, 2002; Bryman, 2007; Harris, 2006; Knight and Trowler, 2000; Ramsden et al., 2007; Scott et al., 2008; Yielder and Codling 2004). Very little research focuses on the APD position, even though it has a significant role to play in learning and teaching outcomes for students, program quality, and the reputation of the Institution within which they work.

In order to clarify how APDs are commonly located in university operations, their operational role is illustrated in Figure 1. A business faculty is used as an example. The formal reporting lines connect the APD to the Head of School and thence to the Dean of the Faculty. The dotted lines, between the APDs and other staff, illustrate the informal collegial relationship APDs have with their colleagues. The role of the APD is formally recognised as staff need to apply for the position. While there is normally a position description for the role, the APD has some autonomy over how they might enact the position which has no formal authority.

Figure 1 near here

University APDs frequently report feeling frustrated and incapable of effectively delivering the full range of roles required of them, and further, that they are often neglected and overlooked in the university leadership development and promotion system (Briggs, 2001). They are frequently given the responsibility for ensuring quality learning and teaching outcomes (in a course of study) because of their tenure and performance in the institution concerned. This typically translates into having responsibilities for coaching and developing instructional staff, managing student issues, monitoring program outcomes, designing curriculum content and instructional design. For the majority of APDs, they must undertake these responsibilities in a collegial manner since many of them will lack any discretionary authority over these tasks, which is normally vested in a formalized management role.

Taken together, the work of Ramsden et al. (1998, 2007), Bryman (2007), and most recently, Scott et al. (2008), provides a useful overview of the literature on academic leadership. Ramsden et al. And Scott et al's work were based on survey findings and Bryman's was a literature review. However, a closer examination of this literature indicates little agreement between the authors in the important leadership factor requirements of APDs. Thus, only one element of the leadership competencies and capabilities identified by Scott, et al. (2008) is also mentioned by Ramsden, et al (1998; 2007) or Bryman (2007). In fact the three authors cited fail to reach any consensus on the competencies required by APDs. In addition, Bryman (2007) does not include the earlier work of Ramsden et al. (1998) at all, thus casting some doubt on the latter's conclusions about academic leadership. . Consequently, it has to be said that a careful comparison of these three recent and important papers on academic leadership fails to provide an integrated and cohesive description of the behaviours needed for effective leadership by APDs. There are three main concerns that emerge from this analysis. The first is the failure to link behaviour to effectiveness.

Leadership is often measured by behaviours through the 360° feedback process. Through this process, the leader's effectiveness within the context in which they are working can be derived. The research cited above does not make it clear whether the behaviours identified in these three papers might be associated with ineffective, moderately ineffective, or extremely effective leadership.

The second concern is the use of leaders' self-report data only, rather than including the reports/perceptions of those with whom the APD works (for example, their Head of School, Academic and Professional staff). The value of using both self and others' perceptions, via a 360° feedback process has been linked to performance improvement, and the acquisition of more robust data on the true nature of an individual's leadership behaviour in their work context. Fletcher and Bailey (2003) have argued that 'multi-source, multi-rater feedback makes a fundamental contribution to performance outcomes for individuals'

The third weakness of the previous work cited is that these authors do not take account of the importance of key leadership competencies and capabilities. That is, they did not establish the 'benchmarks' that were used by respondents to their surveys.

The current study was designed to address these weaknesses by focussing on a key set of behavioural measures associated with academic leadership including a measure of leadership effectiveness. The above studies did not include a measure of effectiveness. Data was derived from multiple sources based and also included an importance (benchmarking) scale. Again, the previous studies only used self perceptions and did not include a measure of importance. APD's actual leadership behaviours were measured rather than participant traits or other personal qualities (which describe leadership *attributes* rather than behaviour). Consequently, the focus of this work corresponds closely with the work of Adair (2005 cited in Middlehurst, 2007), and also the work of Quinn in the management and leadership literature (Lawrence et al., 2009). Both of these researchers have made significant

contributions in their fields by focusing on actual leadership *behaviours*. The next section describes the academic leadership model that was employed to measure such behaviours.

Integrated Competing Values Framework

The Integrated Competing Values Framework (ICVF) defines the core behavioural requirements for individuals in leadership positions. The actual behaviour of a leader, as reported by themselves and their significant others in the workplace, are mapped against this framework. This provides the leader with a profile of their actual leadership behaviour and effectiveness. Hence, the ICVF focuses on what the leader does in practice, rather than measuring the leader's traits or personality attributes. This latter perspective attempts to measure leadership by examining traits and personality attributes such as extroversion, charisma, and values and ethics. Personality and trait theories of leadership are based in psychology and are often considered to be enduring characteristics of the individual. Hence in this paradigm it is important to select the right leader with the right personality attributes and traits. The ICVF, in contrast, is a dynamic model that identifies the complex and paradoxical relationship between different leadership behaviours (Vilkinas and Cartan, 2006) required for effectiveness in a leadership role. It also argues that leaders can be developed through experiential learning and development initiatives. Previously de Boer and Goedegebuure (2009) have argued that:

"future studies take as a starting point that effective leadership in dynamic and complex environments requires a capacity to operate from multiple, often competing perspectives" (p359)

They stated that a leadership approach that takes account of these competing demands needs to be researched within the Higher Education sector. The Competing Values Framework (CVF), the predecessor of the ICVF, is an approach identified by de Boer and Goedegebuure that "would provide us with valuable insight" (p360). Thus the ICVF has been chosen to investigate the leadership behaviours of APD.

The ICVF has been used extensively to explain behaviour of managers in the public and private sectors in Australia and some Asian cultures (Vilkinas and Cartan, 2006; Vilkinas et al., 2008; Vilkinas et al., 2009). It has also served to explain the behaviour of PhD supervisors (Vilkinas, 2008).

The ICVF model is an extension of any earlier perspective developed by Quinn and colleagues (Quinn, 1984, 1988; Quinn et al., 2003; Quinn and Rohrbaugh, 1983), At its heart is the observation that there are two key dimensions to effective leadership-a people-task dimension and an external-internal focus dimension (Vilkinas and Cartan, 2006) (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 near here

Within the model, Vilkinas and Cartan (2006) define five operational roles for the APD, namely, the Innovator, Broker, Deliverer, Monitor, and Developer. Brief descriptions of the behaviours associated with each of these roles and how these roles could be displayed by the APD are provided in Appendix 1.

Within the ICVF model, the five operational roles are paradoxical in nature (Vilkinas and Cartan, 2001, 2006) as is (frequently)the role of the APD itself. These paradoxes can lead to tensions and potential conflict for the individual APD (Debowski, 2007; Robertson, 2005). For example, APDs need to employ a range of strategies that are inherently contradictory. This can include being supportive of their program team (Developer role), whilst at the same time demanding that they complete student assessment and get their marks in on time (Deliverer role). These paradoxical or contradictory approaches (support *and* demand) have been identified by others in research on leadership in higher education (McRoy and Gibbs, 2009; Bush, Briggs and Middlewood, 2006).

There is also a critical *sixth role* within the ICVF, the Integrator. This role has previously been described as the behavioural 'control room' for the other five operational roles (Vilkinas and Cartan, 2001). The Integrator role has two parts: *critical observer* and *reflective learner*. The purpose of the former is to decipher which of the operational roles is required at any particular time in response to any environmental stimuli. In this way, it assists in the appropriate execution of the chosen role. It ensures a 'fit' between context and behaviour (Vilkinas and Cartan, 2001). The purpose of the second part, the reflective learner, is to reflect on past and current experiences in the operational roles and learn from them.. Here, the APD would demonstrate a heightened and accurate self-awareness. This introspection and self-awareness provides individuals with opportunities to learn from their previous experiences and to inform future behaviours. This is the sort of behaviour that Schon describes in his work on the reflective practitioner (Schon, 1991).

Hence, a well-developed Integrator will enable behavioural complexity which is needed if APDs are to deliver on the competing demands they face in this role. Behavioural complexity is the ability to move between the five operational roles with ease as opposed to using the same one or two roles in every situation. That is, it is the ability to be able to deliver any one of the five roles depending on which one is most appropriate at the time (Denison, Hooijberg and Quinn, 1995; Hooijberg, 1996). Previous research (Denison et al., 1995; Hooijberg, 1996) has shown that if an individual does not display behavioural complexity across all of the ICVF roles they are less likely to display leadership effectiveness. The Integrator is the linchpin that allows APD to move easily between the five operational roles (Vilkinas and Cartan, 2001) because it is this skill that ensures they are continuing to be critical observers of their leadership behaviour within the context in which they work.

Leadership effectiveness in complex environments (such as institutions of higher education) requires matching complex behaviour, including competence in a number of roles and the capacity to move effectively between them (Denison et al, 1995).. The ability of APDs to be both critical observers and reflective learners, i.e. to have well developed Integrator capability, will facilitate their effectiveness as leaders as the Integrator has previously been found to be a strong predictor of leadership effectiveness (Vilkinas and Cartan, 2001). Given the importance of behavioural complexity, and key operational roles underpinning the APDs' leadership effectiveness, the current study sought to determine the extent to which APDs actually displayed all of the ICVF roles and the extent to which the APD considered them to be important. It also measured their perceived effectiveness as academic leaders as outlined in the next section.

Method

Participants

Ninety-one APDs at four Australian Universities volunteered to complete the survey, which was part of a leadership development program at each institution. Participation in the program was based on a first-come-first-served basis. Participants were both self-selected and nominated by their Head of School.

The APDs were invited to respond to the survey which was delivered online, and were encouraged to nominate others with whom they worked closely to participate in the survey also. These working colleague respondents were called their 'Significant Others' for the purposes of this study. The 360° feedback process was used as a developmental tool, rather than a performance evaluation tool, hence, nomination of significant others by the APD, whom they believed could provide them with useful feedback, was considered appropriate. This approach is particularly suitable when the 360° feedback process is used for

development purposes and when a number of Significant Others responds to the survey (Atwater et al., 2007; Toegel and Conger, 2003).

Participants were given the option *not* to have their leadership data included in the study; only one individual elected for this option and this data was removed. Hence, only 90 APDs data was analysed in this study. Of the 743 Significant Others who provided feedback on the 90 participants, 25 Head of School, also declined to have their data analysed. After removing a further eight APD SOs who also elected to be excluded from the analyses, the remaining group of 710 SOs comprised 128 Line Managers, 195 Peers (other APDs) , 183 Course Coordinators (also known as Unit or Subject Coordinators), and 204 Professional Staff (sometimes known as Administrative or General staff).

Academic Program Directors

The APDs were predominantly female (69%) which is higher than the national average of 44% (Strachan, Whitehouse, Peetz, Bailey, & Broadbent, 2008). The majority of the APDs (84%) were between 40 and 59 years of age. Most (39%) had held academic positions for more than 13 years (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 near here

The majority (46%) were Lecturer Level B, 44% were Lecturer Level C. Of the remainder, one was Lecturer Level A (8 cases) and one an Associate Professor (1 case). As a group, they had been involved in University work for many years. A majority (59%) of APDs, however, had held their current role for only 1 to 4 years. Some (21%) had held the position for less than 1 year while others (20%) were very experienced in the role. The majority of those (63%) who had held the position for more than 6 months had no previous experience in an APD role. The number of students enrolled in their programs varied signficantly, with

many (36%) having 100 or fewer students, while others (22%) had in excess of 400 students. Hence 33% of APDs supervised five teaching staff or fewer, whereas 31% worked with 13 or more teaching staff. .

Significant Others

The Significant Others were also predominantly female (66%) and (65%) were aged between 40 and 59. They held a range of academic positions and the majority (71%) had been in their current position for 6 years or less.

Method

Data was collected via a 360° feedback methodology commonly used in organisations to measure leadership behaviour (Atwater et al., 2007; Toegel and Conger, 2003). A questionnaire comprised several sections delivered online via an external web provider specialising in leadership surveys.

Materials.

The Integrated Competing Values Framework (ICVF) Instrument

Within the online questionnaire, the same items were used for APDs and their Significant Others, with appropriate grammatical changes made to reflect the capacity in which the respondent was answering the survey (see Appendix 1).

Roles displayed. The ICVF instrument measured the five operational roles using the measures originally developed by Quinn (1984) and adapted by Vilkinas and Cartan (2001, 2006). The language in each of the items had been altered to reflect the university context. That is, a number of APDs and their Significant Others were initially interviewed to identify any changes that were needed in the language of the items in the questionnaire. After these changes were made a small number of APDs did the survey to ensure that the language was appropriate. For each role, there were two or more descriptive phrases (see Appendix 1).

Responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *almost never*; 7 = *almost always*) as this was the same scale used by Quinn (1984).

The questionnaire also measured the sixth role, the Integrator, using measures originally developed by Vilkinas and Cartan (2001, 2006). Responses to the six items measuring the Integrator (see Appendix 1) were rated on the same 7-point Likert scale as the responses to the operational roles items.

Importance of roles. The same items as for Roles Displayed (five operational roles and Integrator role) were also used to measure the *importance* of each role (see Appendix 1). Responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not important at all*; 7 = *very important*).

Leadership Effectiveness

The items that form the leadership Effectiveness scale, originally developed by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983), included: "…how well do I do my job", "…comparison to my APD peers", "…my performance as a role model", "…my success as a APD", and overall Effectiveness. These five Leadership Effectiveness items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not effective;* 5 = *very effective*)

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Raw Data Preparation

Since there were unequal numbers of Significant Others participants per APD, the meanSignificant Other's score for Role Displayed, Role Importance and Leadership Effectiveness was calculated and used in subsequent repeated measures ANOVA analyses.

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Table 1, indicates that the Cronbach α coefficients of internal consistency for variables, in the main, were at or above an acceptable .80 minimum, Nunnally (1978). In future studies, new items will be added/amended for those variables whose Cronbach alpha was suboptimal.

Table 1 near here

Analyses

Statistical analyses consisted repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVA). Given that dependant variables were not independent (they were based on different rater perceptions of each APD), repeated measure ANOVA analyses were appropriate for other analyses (see Cheung, 1999; Dieffendorf et al., 2005). . Thus, for example, in the Leadership Effectiveness repeated ANOVA, the dependent variables were Self-perceived Leadership Effectiveness and their Leadership Effectiveness, as perceived by their Significant Others (Line Managers/Bosses, Peers, Course Coordinators, and Professional Staff). Missing data was resolved using mean replacement in all ANOVAs

ResultsLeadership Effectiveness

As indicated in Table 2, it was evident that the APDs (mean = 3.66) regarded themselves as moderately effective, whereas their SO's tended to rate them slightly higher (mean 4.27-4.31). The repeated measures ANOVA for Leadership Effectiveness, with Position as the within-subjects factor, yielded a significant Position effect, $F(4, 86) = 20.88$, $p < .001$[3]. Pairwise comparisons (with the Bonferroni adjustment) confirmed that APDs scored themselves significantly lower on Leadership Effectiveness than did all their Significant Others.

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[3] Where the Mauchly's test of sphericity was significant, multivariate test statistics are reported. Otherwise, statistics from tests of within-subjects effects are shown.

The Integrator Role: Displayed and Importance

The repeated measures ANOVA for the Integrator role (displayed), with Position as the within-subjects factor yielded a significant result for Position, $F(4, 356) = 8.22$, $p < 0.001$. Both the APDs and their Significant Others said that this role was displayed moderately with a mean ranging from 5.50 to 5.97 (see Table 3). The Line Managers, Peers and Professional Staff reported that the APDs displayed significantly more of the Integrator than the APDs indicated. The repeated measures ANOVA for the Integrator (importance) yielded a non-significant Position effect, $F(4, 86) = 2.06$, $p > 0.50$. That is, the APDs and their Significant Others were in agreement on the importance of the Integrator. They all said that the Integrator was very important with a mean ranging from 6.07 to 6.25 (see Table 3).

The Five Operational Roles: Displayed and Importance

The five operational roles were not displayed or observed equally. The results of the repeated–measures ANOVA for Roles Displayed, with Role and Position as the within-subjects factors, yielded a significant Role effect, $F(4, 86) = 22.19$, $p < 0.001$, Position effect, $F(4, 86) = 19.44$, $p < 0.001$, and a significant Role x Position interaction, $F(16, 74) = 5.15$, $p < 0.001$. The order of the roles was Developer, Deliverer, Innovator, Monitor, and Broker (see Table 4). The scores for all the roles indicated that they were moderately displayed (means: 5.45–5.90; see Table 5) on a 7-point scale, with 7 = *almost always*.

Discussing the significant Role effect here, pairwise comparisons (with the Bonferroni adjustment) demonstrated that the Developer was displayed significantly more than all the other roles and the Deliverer significantly more than the Monitor, and Broker (see Table 4). That is, the APDs were found to focus more on 'the people issues' (Developer) than on 'getting the job done' (Deliverer) and less on monitoring their programs (Monitor) and on developing networks (Broker). And pairwise comparisons (with the Bonferroni adjustment) for Position demonstrated that the APDs reported that they displayed significantly less of the operational roles than their Significant Others said (see Table 5).

The same repeated ANOVA for Roles Importance, with Role and Position as the within-subjects factors, also showed a significant Role effect, $F(4, 86) = 96.27$, $p < 0.001$, Position effect, $F(4, 86) = 4.47$, $p < 0.01$, and a significant Role x Position interaction, $F(16, 74) = 7.22$, $p < 0.001$. The order of the roles was Developer, Deliverer, Innovator, Monitor, and Broker (see Table 4). The scores for all the roles indicated that they were very important (means: 5.88–6.24; see Table 4) on a 7-point scale, with 7 = *very important*.

Pairwise comparisons (with the Bonferroni adjustment) for Role Importance showed that both the APDs and their Significant Others perceived the Developer as the most important role and the Developer and Deliverer significantly more important than the Innovator, Broker and Monitor. The Innovator was also significantly more important than the Broker. That is, the APDs were expected to focus on 'the people issues' (Developer) and on 'getting the job done' (Deliverer) and less on implanting changes (Innovator), developing networks (Broker) and monitoring their programs (Monitor).

Academic Program Directors' Data Compared to Significant Others' Perceptions

Discussing the significant Position effect here, the pairwise comparisons (with the Bonferroni adjustment) demonstrated that the APDs reported that they displayed significantly less of the operational roles than their Significant Others said (see Table 5). And pairwise comparisons (with the Bonferroni adjustment) demonstrated that the Professional Staff indicated that all the roles were significantly more important than what the APDs, Peers and Course Coordinators reported (see Table 5).

Discussion

Leadership Effectiveness

The APDs regarded themselves as moderately effective, whereas their Significant Others tended to rate them slightly higher. To date there has been no research reported that has measured Leadership Effectiveness of APDs within Australian Universities. In the recent work by Scott et al. (2008), for example, the participants were asked to only indicate what factors were most important for them to be effective, but Scott et al. did not report on how effective these APDs actually were as academic leaders.

These current findings suggest that the APDs could become more effective. To explore if these APDs are capable of developing this Leadership Effectiveness, their Integrator scores need to be examined to determine their capacity to critically observe their own leadership behaviour and then to reflect on and learn from those observations.

The Integrator Role: Displayed and Importance

Both the APDs and their Significant Others said that Integrator was displayed moderately. with the Line Managers, Peers and Professional Staff indicating that the APDs did more of the Integrator than the APDs said. That is, they have a reasonably well developed Integrator that could be developed further. All indicated that the Integrator was very important. These findings suggest that these APDs are capable of improving their Leadership Effectiveness. This notion is supported by the study of Vilkinas and Cartan (2001) in which the Integrator was shown to be a strong predictor of Leadership Effectiveness.

One approach that could be taken to develop the Integrator is to assist the APDs to further develop their self awareness as this would enhance their critical observation skills which are one part of the Integrator [for details see Vilkinas, Leask and ladyshewsky (2009)]. The APDs could also be assisted to develop their reflective capability which would enhance the second part of the Integrator [for details see Vilkinas et al (2009)].

The Five Operational Roles: Displayed and Importance

The five operational roles were not displayed equally. That is, the APDs were found to focus significantly more on 'the people issues' (Developer) than on 'getting the job done' (Deliverer) and significantly less on monitoring their programs (Monitor) and on developing networks (Broker). In addition, APDs regarded as significantly more important 'the people issues' (Developer) and 'getting the job done' (Deliverer) and significantly less important implanting changes (Innovator), developing networks (Broker) and monitoring their programs (Monitor).

These results indicated that the APDs and their Significant Others may be unaware of the need for balance across all the roles. Alternatively, given the 'career killer' focus of the role noted by many of the APDs they may try to exit the role as quickly as possible. As a result, they focus on the Developer role, which enables them to maintain their collegial working

relationships. This importance of collegiality expressed through 'dispersed' leadership has been identified as an important capability within the corporate culture of higher education (McElroy and Gibbs, 2009). The other role the APDs focus on is the Deliverer role which focuses on the task dimensions of running the program, rather than on more strategic functions of building networks and innovation, which require longer-term investment in these positions. The data suggests that this group do not focus on or consider important the behavioural complexity needed to move with ease between the roles and the ability to deliver any of the roles depending on which is most appropriate (Denison et al., 1995; Hooijberg, 1996; Hooijberg and Quinn, 1992). As noted, this may be due to individuals trying to exit these positions as soon as possible because of a preference for maintaining their allegiance to their discipline (McRoy and Gibbs, 2009), or because of a lack of leadership savvy. It has been shown in other studies that the effectiveness of leaders is reduced when they do not move between the operational roles when required (Denison et al., 1995; Hooijberg, 1996).

Academic Program Directors' Data Compared to Significant Others' Perceptions

There are some interesting differences in the perceptions of APDs and Professional Staff. As with the Leadership Effectiveness score, the Professional Staff said that the APDs displayed more of the five operational roles and the Integrator role than the APDs said of themselves. The Professional Staff also rated the operational roles as significantly more important compared with the APDs' ratings.

There could be several possible reasons for the differing perceptions by Significant Others.. For example, as Facteau and Craig (2001) have argued, there may be influential and motivational bias where the APD's behaviour varies depending on the people with whom they interact. These differing perceptions may come about because the APDs and the Professional Staff come from different professional backgrounds, e.g. an academic versus an

administrative background. All of the other groups within theSignificant Others category are from an academic background and presumably hold similar perceptions because they value similar behaviours to the APDs. Further, it can be argued that professional staff often work very closely with the APDs in preparing, administering and managing students, issues, grades, timetables etc.   This close interaction may also result in higher ratings by the professional staff. Such differences in perceptions are important, and ought to be addressed, as they may lead to misunderstandings and conflict when the APDs interact with the Professional Staff as they are operating from a different base-line of understanding about the role.

In addition, these results suggest that in the main, APDs do not have an accurate perception of the operational roles they display. Atwater and her colleagues (Atwater et al., 2007; Atwater et al., 2002) for example has argued that being self-aware could be linked to effectiveness.   They found that 'over-raters were poorer performers than under- and in-agreement raters' (2002: 199). The APDs generally rated themselves lower than their Significant Others.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

There were a number of strengths associated with this study. A 360° feedback process, using self and Significant Others' ratings, instead of self-perceptions alone, was employed. It is important for APDs to know if their perceptions are similar or dissimilar to those of their Significant Others as this is a more valid measure of Leadership Effectiveness as it takes into consideration the context.   Atwater et al. (2002) have argued that a relationship exists between being self-aware and Leadership Effectiveness and a 360° measurement provides this measure. The study also provided information on the importance of these roles in the

context of University leadership, which also provides a benchmark of what their Significant Others expect of them..

The current study also measured Leadership Effectiveness which has been missing in many of the previous studies cited in the literature review. Thus, while their findings are important, they are not able to be linked to Leadership Effectiveness and thus may be supporting mediocrity. In addition, the measure of Leadership Effectiveness used here has previously been validated for managers (Vilkinas and Cartan, 2001) and will be subjected to further validation using data from APDs when the database increases in number from further administrations of the ICVF instrument.

The theoretical framework used in this study has scales that have been validated previously for managers (Vilkinas and Cartan, 2001, 2006). To ensure that they were appropriate scales to use in the current study, extensive work was undertaken to improve their face and content validity. As mentioned in the Method section, the language in each of the items had been altered to reflect the university context through interviews and a pilot survey process

A number of limitations are acknowledged. The first is that because a number of APDs self-selected to participate in the study, and because the level of Leadership Effectiveness for these APDs was moderately high, these participants may have been already reasonably effective leaders. Hence, the results of this particular study may not be representative of all APDs in the sector. A second limitation is the small sample size. The study has been undertaken only with a small groups of staff (91 APDs in total) from only four universities. However, G-power (Erdfelder, 1996) indicate a power of .80 to undertake the analyses reported. A third and final limitation concerns the variable of Leadership Effectiveness, which is acknowledged to be highly subjective.

Future Studies

Future research needs to determine whether the favouring of some roles is a contextual factor that reflects the actual demands of the role. That is, some of the contextual factors that need to be investigated are level of academic staff position, length of time in the position and the academic's discipline area.

In addition, the findings from the current study could be developed further by investigating the impact of gender, and age on Leadership Effectiveness and possibly by introducing more objective measures of this variable, although this is not without its difficulties.. The collection of data from a wider range of Universities including those located in other countries, with greater numbers of APDs, will enable these types of analyses to occur. Qualitative research, which explores some of the conceptual differences uncovered by the metrics in this study, may also help to deepen understanding of the pressures these APDs face in their role and why there is a reliance on people/task roles at the expense of other operational roles.

Practical Implications

Some of the practical implications of these research findings are linked to policy formulations. That is, if APDs are to take the leadership role seriously they need to know that it will be recognised in the promotion and performance management systems. In addition, developmental opportunities need to exist for APDs to develop their leadership capability.

Conclusions

From this initial study, it can be concluded that the Academic Program Directors can further develop their leadership capabilities, that they can display leadership behaviours even though

the role does not have the same degree of formal authority as is the case for other positions in higher education institutions. The role of APDs is an important one in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex higher education and global environment. Academic Program Directors have a clear role in the achievement of both short-term priorities and long-term goals in relation to teaching and learning, course outcomes, and institutional rankings. They are the bridge between the multiple stakeholders involved in teaching and learning in universities today. To ignore both the importance of this role, and the need to invest in leadership development in this cohort of staff is a strategy which at best must be seen as short sighted for all Universities.

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