

Leadership by consensus at MU: A look at two leaders

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The researchers are interested in the views and perceptions, about leadership, of two leaders within the University of Missouri at the Columbia campus. Therefore, the aim of this research is to understand and to compare and contrast the leadership styles of these two leaders. In order to reach the aim of this recent study, the researchers have addressed the following research question, “How do you balance the needs of the various stakeholders as you are presented challenges and opportunities that require your leadership skills?” in order to answer the main research question of this study, the following sub questions have been addressed: 1. What are the greatest challenges and opportunities you have faced as a leader?, 2. How do you facilitate negotiations between individuals or groups with competing values?, 3. How do you move the agenda forward to facilitate decision-making?, 4. What has been your greatest accomplishment?, and 5. What advice would you give to an incoming leader in this institution? The researchers have employed a qualitative research design in this study. For this aim, the researchers have conducted semi-structured interviews with two leaders within the University of Missouri system. The first interview has been conducted with President Tim Wolfe. The second interview has been conducted with Dr. Les Hall, interim dean of the medical school. Based on analysing the collected data, the researchers have recognized the importance of leadership for the benefits and endure of organizations. The researchers have also come to the conclusion that both leaders have some similarities and differences while they are leading.

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Introduction

The State, in response to social expectations for its citizens to be adequately prepared to enter into and work productively within society, established universities and colleges through statute, charter, or other legal methods. With time, higher education institutions like universities and colleges increased in size, diversity, and complexity, leadership was entrusted from the legally established boards to numerous agents in the organization (Birnbaum, 1988). As a result, governance and the resulting conflicts between various groups inside and outside the institutions, leading and managing institutions of higher education calls for leadership that promotes a good working relationship among the various stakeholders inside and outside the institution (American Association of University Professors, 1966; Bess and Dee, 2008a).

The stakeholders are the various members or groups in society who are responsible for and responsible to the colleges and universities as well as the students moving into the work force. The stakeholders are a diverse group including students, families of students, faculty, staff, administrators, governing boards, the State politicians, and businesses (Bess and Dee, 2008). For example, when colleges and universities, such as the University of Missouri embarked on the journey to educate professionals, such as dentists, doctors, lawyers, and nurses, it accepts the social contract to provide responsible professionals in their respective fields of expertise.

Statement of the problem

The problem of managing the various types of colleges and institutions resides in the dual frameworks of power that reside within each institution. Birnbaum (1988) referred to this as the 'dualism of controls' in which there are two control systems that are apparent within colleges and universities. First, there is the administrative control system that determines the types, numbers, and characteristics of the outputs. These outputs are educated citizens who are expected to return to the social groups, or society at large, from which they were chosen. Second, there is the group of professionals, faculty and staff, who provide the specialty training and research for the benefit of the students, the institution, and ultimately society. Administrative authority is delegated power from the State to manage resources that support the mission and vision of the institution whereas professional authority is power derived from personal or professional expert knowledge that is necessary for problem solving and information management.

The role of leadership is to effectively bridge the chasm among the members within these two control systems keeping in minds the various needs of the stakeholders. The university president also has additional role of securing external funding sources (Bess and Dee, 2008).

Literature review

The review of the literature that informs this study was organized into three broadly defined and intertwined sections to provide the orienting framework for the research questions. First, the review characterized the institutional environment in which the research questions were situated. This discussion examined the five basic types of institutions and the elements attributable to the University of Missouri at the Columbia, Missouri campus. Second, the literature that defines leadership, the various types of leaders and leadership styles was reviewed. Third, attention was drawn to the relationships between the various institution types with their common leadership styles.

Institution types

Birnbaum (1988) describes five institutions types as 1) collegial, 2) bureaucratic, 3) political, 4) anarchical, and 5) cybernetic. Each of the five subtypes is summarized because no institution is purely of one model. The University of Missouri has characteristics of all these models.

Collegial institution

The collegial institution may be regarded as an organization having a flat structure with the administration and faculty being regarded as equals in an egalitarian and democratic system. Generally, the administration and faculty are interested in the views of other stakeholders but view the importance of the stakeholder information with varying value. Because the hierarchical structure and administrative policies and procedures are generally absent, there is an emphasis on deliberation and thoroughness. Generally decisions are made by consensus and may take long times, especially if the decisions are viewed as having a major impact on the institution. Consensus does not always imply nor require unanimity as various individuals are noted as having more seniority and thus their influence is worthy of recognition and sufficient time is granted for all to voice their opinions. The administration is supportive in nature and may include faculty from time to time who eventually return to their primary duty of teaching. Since the members of the collegial group are regarded as equals, the president is generally elected, not appointed, and the president is vested with extraordinary powers not given to others. Thus, they regard the president as the *first among equals*. The common backgrounds with continued member interactions coupled with a long institutional history of the strong cohesive culture, maintain the important symbols, rites, and stories that keep the community unified. It is this community of individuals with shared beliefs through frequent face-to-face contact that keep this community bonded together for the common good. Thus, an increase in size may disrupt this type of atmosphere and break the collegiality of this institution.

Bureaucratic institution

The bureaucratic system is an institution in which there are various lines of authority and lines of communication. Some of these institutions may not have many levels and be regarded and relatively flat while others are more complex and have many levels in the organizational chart. The location of a particular office or individual in the hierarchical chart is important as it signals the relative level of importance or value of the office or individual to the organization. The organizational structure is very important as it defines the top-down management and bottom-up flow of information. The benefits include clear identification of relationships and work is accomplished through rules and regulations. Job descriptions are key in the performance of all members in this type of organizational structure. The decisions may not always be efficient or the best but are geared at linking means to an end, intentional actions, and maximizing value within the current constraints placed on the organization. One of the benefits comes from the consistent use of the rules and regulations to all people and thus creates a sense of fairness to all (Birnbaum, 1988).

Political institution

The political system is an institution in which the acquisition, development and use of power are paramount to obtaining the desired outcomes when groups disagree. Power may be diffuse rather than centralized. Birnbaum (1988) declared that the pivotal characteristic of political institutions is apathy. This is noted when various groups are interested in the issues

that affect them and not others. Most activity is accomplished by existing policy and procedures. Therefore, the major advantage of this type of system is that decisions can be made without clear goals being established. The disadvantages include the formation of coalitions that discount the value of a group with less power in some particular situations. The structural hierarchy often has many levels that may determine what information is communicated and to whom it is communicated (Birnbaum, 1988).

Anarchical institution

The anarchical system is an institution in which there are many diverse groups each with their own particular concerns and interests. Typically, this would occur at large academic institutions in which there are many schools and colleges, academic learning centers, and many research institutes. There also seems to be a number of levels of management and leadership within the hierarchy. Birnbaum (1988, p 153) refers to this as “organized anarchy”. He asserts that there are three characteristics: 1) problematic goals, 2) unclear technology, and 3) fluid participation. Problematic goals are poorly defined and or stated after (not before) programs are developed and implemented. Recall that technology refers to the various processes through which the institution changes inputs (resources) to outputs (research, educated students, etc.). Fluid participation refers to the changing membership of the various formal and informal groups by which decisions are made at this type of institution within the various group cultures that interact together and within the culture of the larger organization.

Cybernetic institution

The strength of the cybernetic organization is through ‘self-regulation’. The organization subsystems respond to limited numbers of inputs to monitor day-to-day functions, make corrections or adjustments as necessary to provide stability to the organization. This is accomplished by the use of thermostats that measure the life and stability of the organizational subsystems and feedback loops that are enacted for self-corrective actions. Goals are addressed by limiting uncertainty through limiting the number of possible responses. First, move the organization toward a new future goal, then measure the effectiveness of the change. If the improvement is acceptable, continue with the same management plan. If the change does not move the organization in the proper direction, change the approach and re-assess. This cycle can be repeated as necessary for the continued forward movement of the organization.

University of Missouri

The University of Missouri is regarded as a large research institution and has a multilevel hierarchical structure much like many bureaucratic systems but because it has many colleges and educational units nested within the system, each having its own set of goals and objectives, the overall structure is anarchical in appearance. Each working unit with varying degrees of subunits may have rather flat organizational structure or modestly tall organizational structure. At the subunit level in the school of medicine, depending on the leadership, the hierarchical structure may be with few or multiple layers. For example, there are 21 departments, each with a chair that reports to the dean of the medical school, each having their own structure. Within the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Women’s Health there are seven divisions each having varying degrees of management and leadership styles that report to the chairman of this department. There are well structured lines of

communication and in some divisions the leadership may be top-down, where as in other divisions the leadership may be more relaxed and collaborative with the flow of communication as lateral between groups inside the division. Still in other divisions may have less than effective or non-existent communication.

In some respects the University of Missouri is political in nature because there is the obvious and apparent use of power through the formation of alliances to create more power when issues concern multiple groups or indifference when some groups are not concerned with some other issues.

In other respects the University of Missouri is like an anarchical system because of the numbers of semi-autonomous groups that may consider the events of one group as not impacting them or the interaction of multiple groups results in problematic goals, unclear technology, or fluid participation.

The definition of leadership and leadership styles

When the definition of leadership has been investigated in literature, it is not difficult to say that, there are a bunch of different definitions of leadership in related books and articles. For instance, Mills (2005) describes leadership as, “It is a process by which one person influences the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors of others”(p. 11). In a similar vein, Yukl (2006) identifies leadership as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives” (p.8). Instead of finding the adequate definition of leadership, we can bring together the common words on leadership definitions in literature. In this context, as stated by Northouse (2010), “Leadership is a process, leadership involves influence, leadership occurs in groups, and leadership involves common goals” (p.3). From the mentioned common words, Northouse (2010) defines leadership as, “leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (p.3).

Mills (2005) highlighted the importance of leadership in organizations. Similarly, W. Edward Deming (1986) emphasized the importance of leadership for the benefits and continues of organizations. He states that leadership is very important to shape specific policies and behaviors in order to both produce high quality products and diminish waste. By doing so, leaders with their followers aim to increase the satisfaction of customers and to reach more and more customers. Deming’s avocation of leadership can be summarized into five key areas: 1) change agency, 2) teamwork, 3) continuous improvement, 4) trust-building, and 5) short-term goal eradication.

Sosik and Dionne (1997) identified four specific leadership styles: 1) laissez-faire, 2) management by exception, 3) transactional, and 4) transformational. Laissez-faire leadership is negatively related to change agency, continuous improvement, teamwork, trust building, and short-term goal eradication. Management by exception is negatively related to change agency, teamwork, trust building, and short-term goal eradication; but positively related to continuous improvement. Transactional leadership is negatively related to short term goal eradication; but, positively related to trust building, change agency, continuous improvement, and teamwork. Transformational leadership is positively related to change agency, continuous improvement, teamwork, trust building, and short-term goal eradication.

Relationships between leaders and institutions

Effective leadership in the *collegial system* is built on the process of continual social engagement with the constituents in which mutual support and exchange of benefits occur. Since the president is elected and not appointed; then, the president and other leaders are afforded prestige from the group and the members of the group receive support from the leader with mutual support. Leaders rely on expert and referent power whereas reward and coercive power are of little value in this organization. Leaders who do well in this type of organization live up to the expectations of the group, conform to the group expectations of the meaning of leadership, establish clear and effective lines of communication, listen well, reduce status differences, and listen to all constituents (Birnbaum, 1988).

Effective leadership in the *bureaucratic system* is built on having the work coordinated, controlled, and monitored. Bureaucratic organizations work well when the leaders are regarded as legitimate. Legitimization can be achieved by tradition (current and historical traditions) and all have common agreement about the rules of the organization that defines and legitimize the roles that certain people fill (Birnbaum, 1988). In some cases the leaders use *management by exception* looking for continuous improvement (Sosik and Dionne, 1997).

Effective leadership in the *political system* is built on leadership that is interested in learning about the concerns and attitudes of the stakeholders and who clarifies the group values. Many groups within this system need incentives (or coercion) in order to act in the interests of another group within the system. It is the task of leadership to reduce the cost of participation. Often there are coalitions formed as various groups work together (negotiate) because they realize that independently they have limited power but coalitions allow for collective bargaining and creating solutions (Birnbaum, 1988). These leaders may use a mix of management by exception and transactional skills looking for continuous improvement, trust building, change agency, and teamwork (Sosik and Dionne, 1997).

Effective leadership in the *anarchical system* is built on the principles of spending time to understand the problems needing to be addressed, be persistent in bringing participants, problems, and solutions together (garbage can model) and seeing the solutions through to completion, and facilitate communication between the stakeholders with unobtrusive management. It is important for the leaders in this type of organization to remember that there is culture and history that often drives the actions of the people or groups within the larger whole (Birnbaum, 1988). Transactional leadership is important for trust building, change agency, continuous improvement, and teamwork. Transformational leadership is key to promote change, continuous improvement, teamwork, trust building, and short-term goal eradication (Sosik and Dionne, 1997).

Birnbaum (1988) indicates that many leaders in the *cybernetic* type of institutions may lead or manage by exception and respond when there is a problem. Birnbaum (1988) suggests, “presidents should realize the importance of both transactional and transformational leadership” (p. 204). Transactional leadership is used for trust building, change agency, continuous improvement, and teamwork. Transformational leadership is key to promote change, continuous improvement, teamwork, trust building, and short-term goal eradication (Sosik and Dionne, 1997).

Research questions

The researchers are interested in the views and perceptions, about leadership, of two leaders within the University of Missouri at the Columbia campus. The aim of this research is to understand and to compare and contrast the leadership styles of these two leaders. The primary research question is “How do you balance the needs of the various stakeholders as you are presented challenges and opportunities that require your leadership skills?” The semi-structured interviews attempted to answer five questions that supported the global research question.

1. What are the greatest challenges and opportunities you have faced as a leader?
2. How do you facilitate negotiations between individuals or groups with competing values?
3. How do you move the agenda forward to facilitate decision-making?
4. What has been your greatest accomplishment?
5. What advice would you give to an incoming leader in this institution?

To address the research questions, two leaders in senior positions at the University of Missouri – Columbia were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview.

The significance of this study

The information obtained through this research study is important for several reasons. First, the literature provides general descriptions of the types of institutions and their leaders but does not specifically apply the theoretical findings to this specific institution. Constructing a descriptive foundation facilitates current and future efforts to evaluate leadership effectiveness given the specific context in which the leader operates. Second, leaders often cite the considerable challenges they have in contributing to and leading the various institutional groups for the common good as defined in the mission and vision of their institution. Third, by characterizing the contextual elements of leadership as depicted by these leaders, this study may serve as a guide for future leaders in similar roles at this or other similar institutions. Fourth, this study may provide insight into the recruitment and retention of academic institutional leaders as well as guide the education and mentoring of current and future leaders within this institution. Fifth, this study sought to explore the similarities and differences between two leaders at the same institution but within different contexts. This research may contribute to future studies that frame leadership at a large research institution.

Methodology

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two leaders within the University of Missouri system. The first interview was with President Tim Wolfe. He was chosen because of his current plans that created re-organization in the university system to foster collaboration among various groups that previously did not collaborate. The researchers regard his style of leadership as transformational, proactive to solve problems facing the university system as a whole and facilitate communication between the stakeholders. The second interview was with Dr. Les Hall, interim dean of the medical school. He was chosen because in the current fiscal changes he has called upon the chairs of the 21 departments to collaborate together under his guidance to solve difficult questions regarding fiscal and business responsibility and accountability. His style of leadership is also regarded by the researchers as transformational, proactive to solve problems facing the school of medicine within the context of the Columbia campus and the university system at large.

Each interview lasted around 45 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed word by word. After that each interview was reviewed and the information was used to formulate responses to the research questions in the areas of challenges and opportunities, alignment and agreement, agenda setting and decision management, greatest accomplishment, and advice for an incoming leader to the MU system.

In order to promote the reliability and validity of data analysis process the researchers have applied “peer review/ examination” and “adequate engagement in data collection” strategies (Merriam, 2009).

Limitations of the study

Yin (1994) suggested, “case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes” (p. 10). The scope of this research was limited as follows: These two leaders and their leadership styles may not be representative of the other senior leaders in this institution. The academic and institutional contexts in which each leader operates may be different for these two leaders. The members of each leader’s team are already formed and thus no attempt was made to control for the influence each team exerted on its leader or the leader on the team members. The research study is confined to two specific leaders within this particular institution during challenging social-economic-political times.

Findings

Leader #1: Timothy Wolfe, President of the UM System

Introduction: Timothy Wolf, the 23rd president of the University of Missouri system, joined the MU family in December of 2011. He comes to the UM system after a 20 year career in IBM, three years in a consulting firm, and seven years with Novell Software. Collectively having many years of experience in leadership roles.

Challenge and opportunity: His greatest challenge and opportunity as a leader comes from facilitating teams to think about the possibilities for the future by thinking “outside business as usual”. The goal for him as a leader of the team is to bring together the bright people, facilitate the free flow of ideas to create solutions for the challenges facing the team. He notes that it is key to have the members of the team aligned with the mission and vision of the organization, committed to the necessary changes by having everyone aligned to what the future might be, and then willing to see the change implemented and be successful. He provided an example with the departure of Chancellor Brady Deaton. It was necessary for him to clear his schedule, so that in a week’s time he put together eight meetings from various stakeholders. Over 600 people consisting of students, faculty, alumni, donors, the extension program, and public and civic leaders provided input that was then presented to the public for additional comments.

Alignment and agreement: The process of aligning constituents for the common good is so important to him that he will clear his schedule to meet with stakeholders, listen to their concerns, understand their position, and look for common ground between the stakeholders. After the information is gathered and processed, he provides the stakeholders with a collective summary of what he understood them to say as collective opinion. He then provides prioritization with rationale and possible solutions as provided by the teams tasked with

creating or managing solutions. He states that often various stakeholders want the same thing but differ in how they propose to get to the solution. He then challenges the stakeholders by asking them to evaluate if their proposed method is “better, faster, cheaper, or whatever” compared to other stakeholders. If so, then aligning with their plan is the rational, if not he will ask stakeholders to align with the plan that is “better, faster, cheaper, or whatever.” He does not seek 100% agreement, because you don’t have to be in total agreement to move forward. Rather “you can be aligned with something and not be in 100% agreement but believe this will get us to our objective better than doing nothing at all, so I can be comfortable with it even though I might have done a different approach”. Alignment “is a process of conversation” that means making sure that “we are talking about the same thing”. To begin the discussion the objective has to be clear. He states that frequently “frustration or disagreement comes from: we are not talking about the same thing.”

Agenda and decision management: He reports that he has regular meeting with his direct reports. He has items on the agenda, as do his direct reports that are topics “pertinent to and important for the University of Missouri system”. Moving through the agenda often requires intervention by him or his staff, as it is possible to “go off on tangents”. He requires the discussants to be professional by staying on topic, paying attention, and allow others to speak. He expects that everyone participates in the discussions and is aware of the ground rules for conversation. “When you surround yourself with really, really bright people on a topic, wonderful things can happen with that conversation.”

Greatest accomplishment: He states that “The accomplishment I am most proud of as a leader, you have the responsibility to your people and your success is to be defined by how successful your people are”. He continues be defining success as helping someone achieve a goal they did not think they had the capability of achieving and seeing in others positive results. This may occur in personal life as well as professional life.

Advice for a future leader: He explains that “When you come into an opportunity, make sure that you spend a lot of time listening: culture is different, individuals are different, opportunities and challenges are different”. This requires time, open-ended questions, and time to think about and consider the challenges and opportunities before you make decisions. He cautioned against making decisions too early in the new leadership role. Again, success is going to be in part determined by the quality of the people around you, the right people in the right roles, with the proper skills and competencies to accomplish the objectives necessary to move the organization forward. “The vision and strategy you have in place needs to drive everything you do and every decision that you make”. He also notes that leaders that passionate about their job and have fun are better to work for and get more done from their teams.

Additional comments: President Wolfe stresses that leadership is different from management and that it is important to distinguish the two. Leadership involves a process whereby you have a group of highly skilled individuals like “educators or researchers” and you as the leader don’t know the steps involved in meeting the objectives, then as a leader you let them decide on the pathway to accomplish the goal. Management instructs people on what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. An example he provided, a fire in your back yard, will you instruct those around you to get the hose and the bucket and put the water in a specific location as a manager in a crisis should or will you ask people opinions regarding which is better to use: the hose or the bucket. Where you have lower skilled workers such as on a manufacturing line, management is better than leadership as there is not as much opportunity for ‘self-actualization’. Often knowing when to change between the two styles is important

and is often determined by the situation present to you.

Leader #2: Lester Hall, MD, Interim Dean, School of Medicine

Introduction: Dr. Hall was appointed as interim dean of the University of Missouri School of Medicine about one year ago after Dean Robert Churchill retired. Dr. Hall has been at the University of Missouri School of Medicine for approximately 15 years, 11 of which have been in a variety of leadership roles with the preceding role as Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs, in the school of medicine.

Challenge and opportunity: Dr. Hall reports that his greatest opportunity and privilege in the past year has been working with other leaders in the school of medicine and at this campus to affect change in the organization. As a senior leader, he values the opportunity to effect changes in the organization that create positive change in others as they together represent the values and mission of the organization by working the strategic plan of the university and also solve the “problem of the day”. “The challenges are many and in the broadest sense are that you represent so many constituents and points of view and to keep all of those in balance.” He notes that some stakeholders are more vocal than others and he assists all the stakeholders to understand each other’s needs in light of the common good of the organization. The major challenge he described is that of decreasing revenues in health care and for the school of medicine in particular. He is approaching this challenge using the team approach by gaining consensus of the team members as they align their responses with the strategic plans of the organization to address this challenge.

Alignment and agreement: He listens to the various stakeholders, their viewpoints, and their expectations and then he assists them to understand the ground rules for communication, transparency of decision making, and being consistent for the common good. He recognizes that he won’t get 100% agreement, but he can help the team move forward by presenting the challenge as the “burning platform.” This means that change is inevitable and we need to respond proactively to the change or get left behind. In this example of decreasing revenues, he cites that the well-established current fee-for-service payment structure is not sustainable in the current economic market. If this organization is to “stay ahead” then the people inside will need to retool the use of financial resources to continue the delivery of health care. In short, the organization moves ahead proactively by getting alignment of the team members to the vision and mission and reach consensus from the constituents.

Agenda and decision management: Dr. Hall firmly believes that “in reality there are two agendas” and the first one is determined by the “strategic plan” and the second one is determined by the “crisis of the day”. His preference is to spend the majority of his time on the agenda related to the strategic plan as these agenda items are geared at moving the organization forward. However, he realizes that if he does not address the daily crises, then the organization may not be able to address the bigger needs. He addresses the crises by determining the value to the individual or group presenting the crisis, the value or impact the crisis has to the organization, and then determines who or what agency is best suited to address the crisis. There are times; he provided examples of two direct reports each having departmental crises, in which he needed to clear his daily schedule to address these crises. He also states that a good leader responds to those in his charge in order to maintain balance in the various areas of the organization. His role, he stated, is to assemble the right people at the right time to “move the legitimate agenda” forward. Legitimate agenda are the items that move the organization forward in accordance with the agreed strategic plan and solving the

problems of the day that hinder the forward motion of the organization. Some crises are really not crises but a misinterpretation of events and may be solved by supplying proper information to those individuals affected by the ‘crisis.’

Greatest accomplishment: “My two greatest accomplishments are assisting the school of medicine and the healthcare system to become more closely aligned and bringing more business rigor into the organization (school of medicine)”. Until recently the dean of the medical school and the CEO of the healthcare system had not been collaborating for the benefit of the stakeholders: physicians, administrators, patients, and learners. He asserts that it is beneficial for both large groups to work together and reduce cost and reduce risk. Also, by applying sound business principles within the school of medicine, that has a 290 million annual budget, he has been able to reduce costs and improved efficiencies. He asserts that continued changes are planned for the future to improve accountability and transparency of the organization.

Advice for a future leader: He begins by stating, “Leaders who do the best are leaders who value *relationship based leadership*.” He stands by the following saying: “People don’t care what you know until they know that you care.” I found this is a quote from John C. Maxwell, 2007. He recommends that leaders use *relationship-based leadership* and advocate for the common good of the organization. Often leaders need the proper people on the team for the good of the organization. Finally, good leaders learn for others in the organization.

Additional comments: He wants to add, “being a leader can be very rewarding” especially if you are able to positively influence the career of another by creating opportunities for them that allows them to succeed.

Discussion

Comparison of leadership styles

Both President Wolfe and Dr. Hall reported that their greatest challenge and opportunity is working with other individuals within the system to affect change in the organization in accordance with the strategic plan that was developed in response to internal and external forces. While neither specifically stated their theoretical lens it seems to me that they actively interact with their environments and the forces promoting change, and then they derive meaning and the potential impact that some aspect of the environment could have on the organization. They explore with their respective teams in order to comprehend, explain, and interpret the forces of change on the organization. They ask questions, obtain feedback, address concerns, and bring the information back to their constituents for continued action. This is “sense-making process is both cognitive and social” (Bess and Dee, 2008b).

They both use team building to achieve alignment and consensus. In their world they agree that 100% agreement of all the stakeholders is not possible. Dr. Hall mused that he used to be a member of a group that firmly believed that 100% agreement was necessary for a decision to be made. He recalls that very few decisions were made as the majority could not successfully convince the few who were the “hold outs against the change”. They both agree that total agreement is not a workable process; thus, they use the process of consensus building by facilitating alignment of the dissenting stakeholders. This process requires communication and they both see their job is to facilitate the necessary communication between the stakeholders to create the win-win scenarios.

They both lead by modelling behaviors that seek incremental change and then helping the team members align with the incremental changes by reviewing the ground rules for team membership, staying true to the mission and vision of the organization, and reviewing the strategic plan as needed to maintain focus.

They both facilitate trust building between themselves and key members of their teams. President Wolfe alluded several times to the fact that it is very important for good leaders to surround themselves with bright knowledgeable people who have the desire, capability, and dependability to be trust-worthy at the job. He also noted that when you have bright dependable people around you then as a leader it is your role to provide that individual with the framework within which to work. Dr. Hall agrees that trust building is very important in managing the team members. For him trust also means dependability, accountability, and reliability. With these types of people, he is happy to trust them to manage their aspect of the project.

Both President Wolfe and Dr. Hall have and share the long range goals known as the 'MU Strategic plan' with their teams and use short term and intermediate goals to provide a visual pathway for any team member that needs to see incremental process. They both agree that it is the long-term goal that should receive the majority of the effort and not focus on the short-term goals as these may change from time to time.

Contrast of Leadership Styles

In the process of team building, President Wolfe is able to select the individuals he wants on his management teams. He sets high expectations for their presence and active participation at the table. Lack of participation causes President Wolfe to consider the particular stakeholder and their future at the table of conversation. Dr. Hall, on the other hand, cannot easily change the 21 department chairs, so he has to build teams and excite improvement by providing various types of incentives.

As Dr. Hall prefers to spend time working with proactive teams to provide incremental change to move the organization forward, he realizes that part of his duties include dealing with the "crisis of the day." Dealing with these day-to-day unexpected events causes him to surround himself with capable team leaders in the numerous associate deans that work with him and are capable to continue to work the strategic plan. President Wolfe, on the other hand, made it quite clear that those team-members, who are not participating as they ought, may be asked to leave the team.

President Wolfe also states that it is important to know when to employ leadership tactics and when to employ management tactics, which often are dependent on the "crisis of the day". Dr. Hall, on the other hand, states that he prefers to not micromanage and may gather the assistance of one of his associate deans or administrative assistants to assist various team members complete their tasks.

Summary and implications for future study

Summary

Both of these leaders are inside the same institution but assert their leadership in differing contexts. President Wolfe and his teams oversee the entire University of Missouri system. However, Dr. L Hall and his teams oversee the various aspects of the medical school.

They both use change agency, team work and team building strategies, strategies to continue to use continuous improvement, trust building, and to some degree work at short term goal eradication.

Both of these leaders model the traits of transformational leadership (Sosik and Dionne, 1997) and use contingency theory as their lens (Bess and Dee, 2008b). They are ever seeking to understand the culture of the institution, the culture the stakeholders, and consider the effect of culture on the change strategies that they use to continue the forward momentum. Kezar and Eckel (2002) would support the active participation of the leadership to understand the effect of the institutional culture has on the process of change as the leaders consider use of collaboration, uses of rewards and punishments, achieving buy-in, communicating effectively, and helping some one on the team reach their goals as well.

Implications for future study

This study has shown that leadership is important at the president and dean levels of the University of Missouri. This study was limited to two leaders; thus, lends itself to limited interpretive scope. It is interesting that there is continued opportunity to interact with other leaders within the system and assess their styles of leadership. Continued research is needed to determine if the level at which a particular leader is situated impacts their leadership style and if their leadership style impacts the outcomes of their particular unit.

Within organizations of this size it would be interesting to determine if other institution of higher education had similar type leaders and leadership styles and what type of outcomes those institutions had in facing the challenges and opportunities they faced.

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Appendix I

Interview questions for leaders:

1. As a way of introduction, please tell me about yourself in coming to this leadership position.
2. What are the greatest challenges/opportunities you have faced as a leader?
3. How do you balance the needs of the various groups/individuals in resolving the challenges?
4. How do you facilitate negotiations between the groups/individuals?
5. How are decisions made and what is your role in the decision making process?
6. How do you move the agenda forward? What or who determines the agenda?
7. What has been your greatest accomplishment?
8. What advice would you give an incoming leader in this institution?
9. Is there anything I have not asked you that I should?
10. Is there anything else you would like to add to this conversation?