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FACULTY PERFORMANCE AND WORK SATISFACTION

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PREVIEW

DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSON MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES: ENHANCING
FACULTY PERFORMANCE AND WORK SATISFACTION

by

Mary B. Mitchell

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Interdepartmental Area of Administration,
Curriculum and Instruction

Under the Supervision of Professor John W. Creswell

Lincoln, Nebraska

December, 1986

TITLE

DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSON MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES: ENHANCING

FACULTY PERFORMANCE AND WORK SATISFACTION

BY

Mary B. Mitchell

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DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSON MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES: ENHANCING
FACULTY PERFORMANCE AND WORK SATISFACTION

Mary B. Mitchell, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 1986

Advisor: John W. Creswell

Academic leadership effectiveness studies have failed to recognize the importance of strategies used in the primary work unit to enhance faculty performance and work satisfaction and to promote department effectiveness. The purpose of this study was to develop a grounded theory of chairperson management strategy generated from data obtained during interviews of nineteen outstanding department chairpersons at three urban, comprehensive universities located in three midwestern states. The constant comparative method was used to simultaneously collect and analyze data. Evidence is presented to support the theory generated. The congruent interaction of the chairperson's values (basic beliefs), the department's stage of development (goals), and the management strategies (leadership activities and actions) utilized assures chairperson leadership effectiveness; effectiveness is further enhanced by congruence in values and goals at faculty and administrative levels, and by the chairperson's acquisition and control of resources. The theory explains the similarities and differences in the process of effective chairperson management strategy--strategy aimed at enhancing faculty performance and work satisfaction. Specific management strategies

are described with emphasis on implications for administrative policy and practice.

PREVIEW

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It is with great humility and gratitude that I acknowledge the support and encouragement I have received in the pursuit of the degree-- Doctor of Philosophy. The absolute acknowledgment, of course, must go to God. Through His guidance and caring, all other empowerment and vision are derived.

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In addition, Dr. Creswell has arranged for visiting professors on campus, providing the opportunity for graduate students to meet and visit with some of the most outstanding leaders in higher education here and abroad. One such visitor was Dr. Clifton F. Conrad from the Center for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Arizona. His discussion of grounded theory research and subsequent correspondence about my research have been significant factors in the enjoyment and completion of this dissertation. Words cannot express my gratitude for his willingness to be my friend as well as my mentor. Thanks must also go to God's (and Jane Smith's) gift of Kay Currey, my reader and angel of Mercy, and to Anne Kenkel, my very patient office mate. A special thank you goes to Suzie Sybouts, a typist and guiding light.

Advanced education is a personal and professional growth process that goes well beyond the required courses and the dissertation research. Much growth comes through the wonderful interactions with and support of friends and colleagues too numerous to list, but too important to every forget. Blessed are they that walk the paths together.

With great thanksgiving, I celebrate life and living through God.

Mary B. Poulson Mitchell

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION.	1
	Context of the Problem.	2
	Statement of the Problem.	3
	Research Questions.	4
	Definitions	4
	Assumptions	7
	Delimitations	7
	Limitations	7
	Significance of the Study	8
	Organization of the Study	9
II.	METHODS	10
	Naturalistic Paradigm	11
	Grounded Theory Research.	12
	Theoretical Sampling Procedure.	16
	Constant Comparative Method	20
	Theory Generation Process	23
	Literature Review Rationale	28
III.	REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.	31
	Leadership Effectiveness.	32
	Effectiveness as a Construct.	32
	Leadership as a Concept	33
	Leadership Effectiveness.	34
	Academic Department Chairpersons.	44
	Academic Departments.	44
	Department Chairpersons	48
	Effective Chairpersons.	53
	Role Conflict Phenomena	55
	Professional Development.	57
	Faculty Performance and Work Satisfaction	58
	Relationship to Chairpersons.	58
	Motivation Theory	59
	Faculty Morale and Work Satisfaction.	63
	Summary	65
IV.	A GROUNDED THEORY OF CHAIRPERSON MANAGEMENT STRATEGY. . .	68
	Rationale	69
	The Grounded Theory	70
	Evidence of Leader Values	70
	Evidence of Department Stages	78

CHAPTER	PAGE
Evidence of Management Strategies.	81
Evidence of Congruence Level	86
Evidence of Resource Control	88
Summary.	90
V. ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS	92
Constant Comparative Method.	94
Procedure.	97
A Grounded Theory of Chairperson Management Strategy	99
Evidence of the Theory	100
Leader Values.	100
Department Stages.	105
Management Strategies.	108
Congruence Level	110
Resource Control	111
Implications	113
REFERENCES	115
APPENDIX A - Department Chairperson Interview Tool	130
APPENDIX B - Sample Letter to Academic Chiefs.	133
APPENDIX C - Management Strategy Grid.	135

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1	Demographics of the Sample: Nineteen Departments from Three Universities.	21
2	Academic Disciplines Represented in the Sample	22

PREVIEW

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1	Competing Values Framework.	41
2	Leadership Roles.	42
3	Theory of Personal Investment	61

PREVIEW

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Higher education today is characterized by decreased resources, increased institutional accountability, vigorous competition for fewer students, and changes in the demographics and values of students (Breneman, 1983; Carnegie Council, 1980; Contra, 1980; Glenny, 1980; Mortimer & Tierney, 1979; Wharton, 1983). In addition, the transition into a technological, information-focused age is exerting pressure on higher education institutions. As more and more adults return to postsecondary education to improve their quality of life or to pursue essential retraining, changes are needed in the provision of educational services (Bowen, 1982; Chickering, 1984; Cross, 1985; Gappa, 1984; Kuh & Sturgis, 1980; Levine, 1981, 1984; Mortimer, 1985; Riesman, 1981; Weathersby & Tarule, 1980).

These external and internal pressures can cause faculty to feel a loss of work satisfaction (Altbach, 1981; Carnegie Foundation, 1985; Clark, 1985; Lonsdale & Williamson, 1980; Schuster & Bowen, 1985; Slaughter, 1985), leading to decreased productivity and quality of performance at a time when the cry for accountability is heightened and the professorial work force is diminished (Bowen & Schuster, 1986; Clark & Lewis, 1985). Effective and efficient utilization of the current core group of faculty becomes imperative (Austin & Gamson, 1983; Baldwin & Blackburn, 1983; Eble, 1985; Eble & McKeachie, 1985; McKeachie, 1982, 1983; Nelsen, 1981; Rice, 1985).

Context of the Problem

Academic departments are the primary work environments for faculty; therefore, chairpersons are the key managers accountable for faculty performance and work satisfaction (Bennett, 1983a; Brann, 1972; Brown, 1977; Tucker, 1984). Pressures for increased faculty productivity, then, have caused increased interest in the department chairperson's leadership role (Bennett, 1983b; Booth, 1982; Brown, 1977; Tucker, 1984). The leadership activities and actions, management strategies used by those who best exemplify what others could follow, should be researched and identified. We need to know how successful department chairpersons effect high faculty morale and optimum faculty productivity in teaching, research, and service.

Few scholars have studied the management of academic departments during more recent times of change and challenge (Dressel, Johnson, & Marcus, 1972; McHenry & Associates, 1982). Little guidance is given chairpersons regarding management techniques and strategies (Bennett, 1983a; Booth, 1978, 1982; Bragg, 1981; Creswell, Seagren, & Henry, 1985); the recommendations offered chairpersons are seldom based on systematic study in higher education settings (Bennett, 1983a, 1983b; Knight & Holen, 1985).

Studies of the roles, functions, and management styles of department chairpersons do not address current leadership effectiveness principles (Ahmann, 1972; Bennett, 1983b; McLaughlin, Montgomery, & Sullins, 1977; Roach, 1976; Tucker, 1984; Waltzer, 1975). Leadership and organizational effectiveness studies fail to recognize the

impact of leadership in the primary work unit (Astin & Scherri, 1980; Cameron, 1985a; Cameron & Whetten, 1983; Faerman & Quinn, 1985; Whetten & Cameron, 1985).

This study seeks to contribute to the literature by addressing the deficiency in our understanding of the process of effective department leadership; how do successful chairpersons enhance faculty performance and work satisfaction? The identification and description of effective faculty management techniques has practical significance as a guide for other department chairpersons facing similar challenges and opportunities. The significance for higher education lies in the theory generated and presented here, a theory of the process of effective academic department leadership.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to use a naturalistic paradigm to investigate the management strategies of department chairpersons who have effectively enhanced faculty performance and work satisfaction. The sample included outstanding chairpersons identified by chief academic officers at three urban, comprehensive universities located in three midwestern states. Data collected from interviews of chairpersons were simultaneously analyzed using the constant comparative method of inductive reasoning to generate a grounded theory of chairperson management strategy.

Research Questions

1. What are the management strategies used by effective department chairpersons to enhance faculty performance and work satisfaction?
2. What are the principal factors associated with the process of effective department leadership and faculty management strategy?

Definitions

Academic department. The academic department is the basic curricular and accounting unit in a college or university. These units are typically formed around academic disciplines and are "charged organizationally with the development, preservation and transmission of knowledge" (Bennett, 1983a, p. 52).

Department chairperson. The department chairperson is a first-line manager as the designated leader of the academic department, the basic unit within the university. For the purpose of this study, no distinction is made among the titles department head, department chair, department chairman, and department chairperson.

Faculty performance. Faculty performance is the quality and quantity of faculty productivity in the areas of teaching, research, service, personal and professional growth, and collegial responsibility. In this study, only the collective performance of faculty in a department is considered and only as judged by the department chairperson using institution and department standards.

Work satisfaction. Work satisfaction is the general level of faculty morale in the department as judged by the chairperson, based on perceptions of job commitment and involvement, cultural strength, motivation, and general well-being.

Chairperson management strategies. Chairperson management strategies are the policies, actions, or activities used by chairpersons to enhance faculty performance and work satisfaction. Effective managing requires leadership; therefore, the two terms are used synonymously. "Managerial leadership is behavior that elicits voluntary follower behavior beyond that associated with required performance on the job" (Albanese, 1981, p. 387).

Leadership. Leadership is described by Peters and Austin (1985) as connoting "unleashing energy, building, freeing and growing" (p. xix). Part of leadership is management which refers to planning, organizing, directing, and controlling (Drucker, 1974) to create an environment where people can accomplish goals efficiently and effectively (Albanese, 1981). As noted above in defining chairperson management strategies, leadership and management are used synonymously in this study.

Effectiveness. The construct known as effectiveness can never be precisely defined or measured because the meaning is socially determined and describes both the individual and the performance--both the process and the product of leadership. Nevertheless, "one cannot propose a theory of . . . administration for higher education without relying on effectiveness as the fundamental dependent variable" (Cameron, 1985b, p. 1). Effectiveness in department leadership and

chairperson management strategy is the dependent variable of the theory discovered in this study.

Leadership effectiveness. Leadership effectiveness is the core variable (the central, composite process in the problem studied) discovered in this study. In the higher education literature (Whetten & Cameron, 1985 most notably), the socially accepted definition of leadership effectiveness is the ability to promote optimum faculty productivity (in research and the development of quality graduate students), while managing limited resources.

Outstanding chairpersons. Outstanding chairpersons are those considered to be most effective in the leadership role, those who head the outstanding departments within the institution. The departments and chairpersons are those identified by the chief academic officers (in consultation with appropriate deans) according to criteria appropriate to the institution and environmental context. Based on current literature, criteria suggested to the academic officers included department productivity, economic efficiency, quality of faculty, curriculum, and students, plus the work satisfaction of faculty.

Urban university. The urban university is an institution of higher education located in a large metropolitan area where the university accommodates many nontraditional, part-time, and evening students including graduate students. The primary concerns are teaching and service with less emphasis on research due to few doctoral programs. The University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), University of Missouri at Kansas City (UMKC), and Wichita State University (Wichita) were utilized in this study.

Assumptions

1. Data collection by personal interviews and data analysis by the constant comparative method are viable approaches to the study of the management strategies used by department chairpersons. The use of an inductive, theory-generating approach is appropriate because there is no established theory to be tested (based on a comprehensive literature search).

2. Academic departments comprise the primary work environment for faculty; therefore, the department chairperson is the key manager impacting faculty performance and work satisfaction.

Delimitations

The focus of the study is limited to effective department chairpersons at the three universities. No effort is made to balance types and sizes of departments used in the study. Knight and Holen (1985) report no differences across wide ranges of department size and institutional type in their study of effective department chairpersons.

Limitations

Departments at three midwestern universities are utilized to minimize the expense and travel time of the researcher.

Significance of the Study

This study differs from previous leadership research in three important ways. First, it focuses on leadership and organizational effectiveness at the first-line management level. Second, it studies academic department effectiveness from the perspective of faculty performance and work satisfaction as influenced by chairperson strategies. Third, it utilizes a theory generating research approach which frees it from overly confining, predetermined theoretical propositions.

Researchers may benefit from the study due to the development of theory and the expansion of the body of knowledge specific to higher education institutions. The theory generated can provide hypotheses for future testing, verification, or alteration. Although the results may apply most directly to the urban university environment, the study contributes to the literature on academic department leadership.

Practitioners who may benefit from the study include educational administrators who can turn to the study's theoretical propositions as a base for the selection, development, and support of chairpersons. The identification and description of the management strategies used by effective department chairpersons indicate techniques for maximizing the talents and energies of current faculty. Institutions and departments that use these strategies can benefit from the resultant improvement in faculty productivity and quality of education.