LEADERSHIP STYLES IN A COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

Pao-Cheng Lin*

Department of Business Administration, Nanya Institute of Technology

Chung-Li, Taiwan, 32034

Abstract

Robbins (2001) stated, “Effective leaders do not use any single style”. There was a similar result in this study. In other words, those chairpersons used the transformational or transactional leadership to handle or maintain their organizations. Otherwise, they also adjusted their styles to the different situations.

Key Words：leadership style, college of technology , chairperson of graduate school, case study.

*E-mail: pclin@nanya.edu.tw

Tel: 03-4361070 # 5608, Fax: 03-4373959

科技學院研究所長之領導風格分析與比較

林保成

南亞技術學院企業管理學系

摘要

學者 Robbins, S. P. (2001) 曾說：「有效率的領導者絕非採用單一領導風格的。」，而本研究也有著相似結果，當這些所長在維續與發展其組織時，大抵均採轉化(transformational)或是交易(transactional)式的領導風格，但也常隨情況變異而運用其他不同的領導風格。

關鍵詞：領導風格、科技學院、研究所所長、個案研究。

*E-mail: pclin@nanya.edu.tw

Tel: 03-4361070 # 5608, Fax: 03-4373959

1. Introduction

Facing a lack of natural resources and a relatively small domestic market, Taiwan has had to take advantage of technology and education to develop and expand its international trade. In the 2003–2004 Global Competitiveness Report, Taiwan's technology competitiveness was ranked third out of 102 countries (World Economic Forum, WEF, 2004). Taiwan's economy was also ranked 15th in the world (Ministry of Economic Affairs, MOEA, 2004). To maintain these rankings, Taiwan must set a high standard for technology and education. In other words, Taiwan needs a good technology education system.

In the U.S., the chairperson is very important to the organization and must be chosen carefully by the committee. According to Roach (as cited in Hilosky & Watwood, 1997), about 80% of institutional decisions at universities in the United States are made at the department level, making the chairperson instrumental in implementing change at the institution. Wolverton and Gmelch (2002) stated that the chairperson takes care of the following administrative activities and responsibilities:

1. Resource management: budget planning, development, and expenditures; hiring and personnel supervision; planning and development of facilities and equipment.
2. Academic personnel management: faculty/staff development.
3. Productivity: academic program planning, curriculum development, and evaluation.
4. Personal scholarship: instruction and research.
5. Leadership of faculty, staff, and students.
6. External and political relations: responsiveness to students and the general community for the benefit of the institution.

A chairperson needs to engage in planning, organizing, controlling, and leading. Graduate school chairpersons are given formal responsibilities that could affect the constituent college in significant ways, because they can act as gatekeepers for educational change or as facilitators of change[5]. This expectation is also relevant in Taiwan.

2. Literature Review

According to Nahavandi (2003), the root of the modern leadership theory study can be traced to the western industrial revolution at the end of the 19th century so literature about leadership comes from the west. For this reason, the researcher followed western definitions and theories of leadership to do this study.

Krech and Crutchfield (1948) defined leadership as an integral part of the group process or as a group phenomenon. Other researchers stated that leadership is a process of influence, the initiation of structure, and an instrument for goal achievement (Cairncross, 2002; Homans, 1958). Thus, "leadership is the ability to effectively use strategic competencies and influence to accomplish organizational goals" (Weiss, 2001). Yukl (1994) cited a similar meaning, stating that leadership "involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person over other people to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organization".

Therefore, in the most general sense, leadership involves a number of characteristics, including interactions among two or more people, a leader's intentional influence on a follower's behavior, and the movement of individuals according to some specified objective (Erez, & Earley, 1993; Yukl, 1989).

3. Methodology

The purpose of this research was to investigate the leadership styles of six graduate school chairpersons at the Technology College in A Normal University in Taiwan. The research study also examined how the chairpersons' leadership. Six chairpersons from six different graduate institutes participated in this study through in-depth interviews.

3.1 Research Design

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), a case study tries to examine "a bounded system or a case over time in detail, employing multiple sources of data found in the setting". A case study is also "an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or

social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community" (Merriam, 2002). The researcher selected a case study method because it is particularly useful for studying educational innovation, for evaluating programs, and for informing policy (Merriam, 1998).

As Benny and Hughes pointed out, the interview is a favored tool of social researchers (as cited in Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Qualitative in-depth interviewing has been referred to as non-directive, unstructured, non-standardized, and open-ended.

A purposeful sample was used in this study because it aims first at, "selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth"(Patton, 1990), and second, to "select particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Also, it was important for this study to focus on the chairperson's leadership style in the related graduate schools of technology education at a Normal University in Taiwan.

3.2 Participant Selection

This study involved the chairpersons of six graduate schools of the Technology College at A Normal University in Taiwan. The researcher chose the Technology College at A Normal University in Taiwan for this case study because it is the first public normal university in Taiwan; it has the longest historical development with the best reputation and research resources; it has had a longer development period than other normal universities and colleges; and it has six graduate schools.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher selected one chairperson from the Technology College to pilot the interview protocol and to ensure that the questions would be understood and accepted. The respondent indicated that the interview protocol was clear, understandable, and acceptable. No changes were made.

The in-depth interview is a particularly useful tool for researchers engaged in study and research[27]. For this study, the researcher conducted one or two recorded interviews with each participant. Each interview lasted for about 1 hour.

3.4 Instrumentation

Borland (2001) stated that, “The institutional researchers who conduct qualitative research must recognize that they are the primary instruments for research design, data collection and management, data analysis, and the interpretation and reporting processes”. Creswell (1998) thought that the qualitative researcher “builds a complex holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting”.

Researchers must be aware that they can and often do influence every aspect of the research, including the results. Because of this, researchers must impose a design structure that increases levels of certainty about relative truth, decreases subjectivity, and increases objectivity (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994). Basically, “the qualitative researchers assume interactive social roles in which they record observations and interviews with participants in a range of contexts” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

3.5 Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) defined qualitative data analysis as “ working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing it, and searching for patterns”.

The researcher conducted the interviews in Mandarin and then translated them into English. Because the data analysis of the interviews depended on the researcher’s translation, the data analysis also involved cross-cultural problems (Hulin & Mayer, 1996). For this reason, the researcher did not translate the entire interviews but instead chose key words or important information and sentences to translate and analyze in this research.

4. Results

As leaders of their graduate schools, chairpersons have to provide direction and a vision. They also represent their organizations at professional meetings, participate in college and university committees to keep faculty informed of external concerns, and provide external leadership for their organization by working with their constituents to coordinate organizational activities (Gmelch & Miskin, 1995).

4.1 Preferred leadership behaviors of chairpersons.

In general, leadership means different things to different people. Because of this, the six chairpersons all have different leadership behaviors that they prefer.

For example, Participant 1 believed a chairperson is like a parent in his or her graduate school. Therefore, he must take care of his followers and provide direction for his or her organization, concentrating doing the right things. Because of these beliefs, Participant 1 used the following attitude to lead his followers: "In my organization, my role is to plan, organize, and direct the jobs for my faculty members. I give some power to my followers to do their jobs, but on the other hand, I am responsible for their faults."

Participant 3 said "the environment will change the leadership style." In Taiwan graduate school chairpersons are not as powerful today as they were in the past. Most school administrators have to get input from different levels at meetings. Chairpersons use negotiation, collaboration, coordination, and communication to promote their leadership (Participants 3 and 4). Usually, chairpersons will avoid using an authoritative style because it may cause conflict between various chairpersons and faculty members (Participants 1 and 3).

According to Bass (2000), "There is a strong tendency to advocate that we must be democratic. Followers should be empowered to share in decision-making or make their own leader-free decisions"[35]. Followers are responsible for implementing the decisions in this kind of leadership. For example, Participants 2 and 6 used the graduate school meetings and subcommittee meetings to share their administrative power and decision-making. In this kind of situation, followers will take leadership positions as needed, and leaders will become followers as needed. This is probably what caused Participant 6 to say that he does not have any single leadership style. He said that "chairpersons have only two things to do in the meeting, first, summarize the meeting results and second, make sure the summary is correct by consulting other faculty member."

Participant 5 was the only chairperson to identify a leadership style for himself. He thought of himself as an initiative leader. He also used a business perspective to guide his organization because his graduate school faces more challenges from the external environment. Because of this, the faculty has to work hard in this graduate school. He believes the operational model of business includes the following four principles: "(1) share responsibility, (2) pursue ideal, (3) individualized development, and (4) working

innovation"(Participant 5). If an educational organization uses the four principles it will be able to face its challenges, either internal or external.

A chairperson's role should be a service role but not a humble one, according to Participants 2, 3, 4, and 5. Participant 5 said, "A chairperson should be a senior professor that has to respond to the future of his/her organization." Participants 4 and 5 added that chairpersons also need to be concerned about the different standpoints, situations, and needs for their followers. In summary, leadership and service are two sides of one coin.

Leadership is not only about influencing an organization by following the decision making of one individual. It also involves a spirit of service that includes active consideration for the followers' needs. However, the direction and goal of the organization is still decided by the leader. Chairpersons use negotiation, collaboration, coordination, and communication to replace the authoritarian style. According to Participant 3, "Chairs establish direction by developing a vision of the future; then they align the faculty by communicating this vision and inspiring them to overcome hurdles."

4.2 Foundations of chairpersons' leadership

According to the interviews, the six participants developed their leadership styles based on different factors, including educational process, past work experiences, personalities, and human relationships. For example, Participant 2 said her leadership was developed through observation. "I was a follower for a long time in the past so I could observe how a lot of people do their leadership. After the observation and deep thinking during those years, I formed my personal leadership style."

Participant 1 pointed to the following four influences on the development of his leadership style: educational processes, work experiences, research processes, and teaching areas. The first influence was the educational processes in which he was involved. The purpose of a normal education is to train people in how to be teachers and leaders in the classroom. So, "I learned leadership from my normal educational processes." Participant 6 did not have any comments about this issue. He said he used the democratic method to take charge at meetings and to get results.

The second influence was his past work experience: "I used to be a basic level leader and officer at a private factory and in the military." Before his current job, he was also a director of a graduate program and the director of foreign students at a state university in the

United States. He stated that "sometimes the work environment will push someone to have to train themselves as leaders, and then to lead their followers." The third influence was research processes in which he was involved. He said, "Most of the leadership training came from how to manage research projects." The final influence was his teaching area. His professional field was human resources, and therefore, he has to "absorb a lot of information and knowledge in the areas of organizational leadership and organizational behavior." Books and information from other sources also formed his leadership style. In sum, he said, "I have several years training and learning experiences and opportunities to practice my leadership in a formal structure."

Participant 5 said that "Personality should affect how someone performs his or her leadership. But this kind of leadership also will be influenced by the external environment." Sometimes, the external environment and position identification do not allow a leader to feel passionate in performing his or her leadership role, according to Participants 3 and 5. In other words, leaders have to understand and try to keep a balance between their personalities and the external environment. If a chairperson cannot keep a balance between these, then he or she should not accept a chairperson's position or any other kind of administrative position, said Participant 5.

Participant 4 focused his leadership foundation on his social experiences and human relationships. "I think my leadership is built on my continuing experience, social experiences, and human relationships." He also talked about how social experiences have affected his leadership. He said that "social experience will bring some frustrations, and those frustrations will help people to become more mature." He also points out that "a leader should get some experience about what is good communication from the process of human relationship."

4.3 Effect of leadership on the graduate school

According to Schein, "in young organizations, the founders and leaders largely determine the culture of the organization by establishing what needs to be accomplished in order for the organization to achieve its goal"[36]. Participant 1 established and organized his graduate school about 3 years ago. In his interview he mentioned the same idea as Schein: "For myself, before I ran this graduate school, I had some expectations for it. I wished for it to be open, happy, and have good academic achievement." He used the following strategies:

"In this administrative position I have to achieve goals for my organization. However, I cannot only use the formal authority to do it. I used informal occasions to affect the followers and build the relationship." In other words, he thought that a leader must use informal leadership or a non-authoritarian method to lead in a small and young organization. Even if leaders and their followers have a good relationship, the leaders' orders must be very clear, and they need to remind the followers about the time they have to complete their jobs.

But Participant 1 said he was not directive in his relationship with his subordinates; "A good chair does not ask the follower to do what job in what time." In the 2 years in which he has operated his graduate school, he has used an interactive method based on his good relationship with his followers to complete the job. Because of this, he believes his method was suitable for this small and young graduate school.

Participants 2, 3, and 4 had only taken their positions as chairpersons about 2–6 months before the researcher interviewed them. This caused them to be unsure of how strongly their leadership had affected their organization. However, they all had changed at least something in their organizations. For example, Participant 2 believed a chairperson's position is a service role. She "emphasized the service idea and asked the office staff to carry it out." This means that "the office of a graduate school has to support teachers' teaching first." She was happy this had earned her the teachers' admiration and support.

After a couple of minutes of careful consideration, Participant 3 expressed how his leadership has affected his organization. "I asked the office staff to be the team members. In addition, I asked them to support and interact with everyone. Each staff has his/her assistant for when someone is absent. They can also work together, but do different things." When asked how his leadership has affected his graduate school, Participant 4 focused on the organizational climate. He hoped to "use good communication to form a good relationship in this graduate school." He also said that "if a chair has good communication with his faculty, then they should be willing to trust each other. So the chair can share his/her power and responsibilities with the followers."

Participant 5 expressed strong emotions when asked how his leadership has affected his graduate school. He was proud of his leadership and "excited" about the past 5 years, "because the organization had a great change in every area, including work efficacy and good organizational climate." He stated that a special leadership style was suitable for this

university and for Taiwan. The special leadership style was to "respect the senior members and we should try to use their opinion to form leadership ambiance." In other words, he believed that a good leader should connect the power and wisdom of younger members and senior members to help the organization. Team members, whether they are young members or senior members, should work together and not resist each other. Participant 6 did not recognize that he had any special leadership style. For his leadership, he only had the following opinion: "If I follow the regulations of the school to do my job, then everything should be fine for my organization."

5. Discussions and Conclusions

5.1 Discussions

The participants for this study were from six different graduate schools of technology education in the Technology College of a Normal University in Taiwan. The participants consisted of six chairpersons from the six graduate schools being studied. Each of the chairpersons was asked to participate in an in-depth interview investigating the roles of the chairperson, his/her leadership style

Because of his or her administrative title and power, there is no doubt that the chairperson of a graduate school is a leader. Bennis and Nanus (1985) stated that leadership is the wise use of power. The different leadership styles of the chairpersons influence and guide their organizations and results in different directions, courses, actions, and opinions.

Based upon the interviews of the six chairpersons, when asked they generally identified a preferred leadership style. However, when asked how their leadership affected the organizational culture they indicated through their responses that they used multiple leadership style for different situations.

Based on the results from the interviews and analyses, the researcher divided the six chairpersons into the four following groups:

1. Participant 1 tended to use active transactional leadership, but sometimes also used the inspirational motivation characteristics of transformation to articulate his vision.

2. Participants 2 and 6 were passive management by expectation leaders because they only followed the meeting results to define their leadership, but they also used democratic aspects of transformational leadership in their organizations.
3. Participant 3 usually used transformational methods to lead his followers, but also used the contingent reward characteristic of transactional leadership to clarify roles and tasks for his followers.
4. Participants 4 and 5 were the closest to transformational leadership; they mostly focused on two characteristics of transformational leadership in their roles.

5.2 Conclusions

Robbins (2001) stated, “Effective leaders do not use any single style”. In other words, leaders adjust their style to the situation. The six chairpersons in this study used one primary leadership and several sub-leadership styles to handle or maintain their organizations.

Allen-Meares (1997) effectively defined the predicament of chairpersons who serve a graduate school at a large public university and are required to function sandwiched between faculty and central administration and between internal and external affairs. It is important for a successful chairperson of a graduate school, or a present or prospective chairperson, to know what is expected of him or her and to continuously enhance his or her skills.

In addition, the researcher also believed that chairperson’s task in the graduate school “is designing the learning processes whereby people through the organization can deal productively with the critical issues they face and develop their mastery in the learning disciplines”(Senge, 1990)

This study had its limitation. The limitation is that the results from this study cannot be generalized to other schools. The results are only appropriate for the six graduate schools in the Technology College at a Normal University in Taiwan. Because of this, the results might change according to the different technology facilities and resources, and academic levels of different graduate schools.

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