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2. The Conceptualization of Leadership by Department Heads in Colleges of Agriculture at Land-Grant Institutions

3. Research Paper

4. While there have been many studies on leadership in higher education, few have focused exclusively on the department head, and fewer still have focused on department heads' conceptualizations of leadership. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions and conceptualization of leadership by department heads in colleges of agriculture

5. Yes

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The Conceptualization of Leadership by Department Heads in Colleges of Agriculture at Land-Grant Institutions

Introduction/Conceptual Framework

The complexity of leading, specifically an academic department, is daunting. Universities now “require leaders who thrive on the challenge of change; who foster environments of innovation; who encourage trust and learning; and who lead themselves, their constituents, and their units, departments, and universities successfully into the future” (Brown, 2001, p. 312). Not an easy task for even the most experienced and developed leader. The issue is that most department heads are not chosen based on their leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities. Bass (1990) notes that “technical and professional competence often tend to be valued over competence as a supervisor and a leader,” (p. 813) leading to ineffective leadership and inability to change and develop the organization. Strong department heads who understand the complexities of the job as well as the means of how to perform to high standards are needed to develop departments into strong entities.

Purpose/Objectives

While there have been many studies on leadership in higher education, few have focused exclusively on the department head, and fewer still have focused on department heads’ conceptualizations of leadership and leadership development. This is significant because department head leadership is the building block of university administrative success. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions and conceptualization of department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant universities, regarding leadership. Pfeffer (1977) stated that if a researcher wanted to understand the behavior of leaders, she must “begin by attempting to find out what they are thinking about the situation in which they would be a leader” (p. 106). This study explores just that.

Lack of training and development for leaders leads to the inability of the leader to lead (Bass, 1990). This study is significant because ineffective leadership, at a departmental level, leads to a breakdown of organizational success. This is important because department heads are the first line of academic leadership who have daily access and interactions with faculty, staff, and students. The findings of this research can be utilized by those who seek to understand the phenomenon of leadership at the departmental level, those who select department heads, those who develop or have developed academic leadership development programs, those considering a department head position, and those who interact with department heads on a daily basis. Findings can also be utilized by faculty to gain a deeper understanding of the position and function of department heads.

Methods

Research scholars and practitioners have stated that the methodology chosen should fit the research questions and the purpose of the study presented (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2005; Patton, 2002). Because of the purpose and research questions of this study, a basic research type of qualitative methodology was the methodological type which was most fitting for this research study. Qualitative studies are utilized not for generalization but for “deepening understanding” (Patton, 2002, p. 10). Also, qualitative methodology is most useful in the exploratory phases of a construct (Conger, 1998). Because empirical research has yet to capture the information sought by this generative study, qualitative methodology allowed the researcher to inductively conduct

research in a naturalistic manner so that themes would be emergent. This basic qualitative study is framed by the qualitative theoretical traditions of phenomenology and constructionism. Phenomenology explores “how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Whether a self chosen path or thrust into leadership roles because of contextual needs, the population for this study has directly experienced the phenomenon of leadership in an academic department. They are key resources for first-hand knowledge regarding this phenomenon. Patton states that in framing a study with constructionism, the researcher is looking to see the “reported perceptions, ‘truths,’ explanations, and beliefs” (2002, p. 132).

The population of this study consists of current and former department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions in the United States. It was determined that a snowball sampling technique would allow the researcher access to department heads. The sample for this study consisted of ten current or former department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions in the United States. Two of the ten department heads were women, but to insure anonymity, all were referred to as “he” in this document. Six of the department heads led bench science departments, while four led social science departments. Two of the ten department heads in the sample were former department heads. One had retired and the other went back to being a professor after he chose to step down from his position.

The primary method of data collection utilized by the researcher was interviews. A semi-structured interview protocol was utilized. This protocol was developed by the researcher and the first set of questions was peer and expert reviewed in Fall 2006. Following Patton’s (2002) concept of “emergent design flexibility” (p. 40), the protocol was field tested using two department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions and an associate dean at the same type of institution for subject triangulation purposes.

Inductive qualitative analysis is built upon a “solid foundation of specific, concrete, and detailed observations, quotations, documents, and cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 58). Data collection for this study included interviews, observations, and document analysis of materials pertaining to the leadership development of department heads. Patton (2002) notes that “studies that use only one method [of data collection] are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method” (p. 248). Utilizing different types of data for analysis is a measure of triangulation. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) note that the “aggregation of data from different sources will unproblematically add up to produce a more complete picture” (p. 199). Because the researcher focused on the perceptions of department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions, interviews were the primary method utilized.

Findings, Conclusions and Discussion

We Not Only Have the College, But We Have Two Agencies

It can be concluded, for this sample, the tripartite mission of a land-grant institution of teaching, research, and extension adds a layer of perceived complexity to the department head job. Seven of the ten department heads interviewed spoke specifically and spontaneously about the influence of the tripartite mission when leading departments. One department head stated that his job entailed “deciding whether the classes get taught, whether research gets done, and whether extension programs are developed and delivered.”

It can also be concluded that the implications of having to report to not only the dean but also the directors of the two other agencies was an issue for some of the department heads in this sample. One department head commented on the feeling of “disjointment” that comes with

having to answer to a dean and two directors. Another department head notes that one must understand the “pressures and constraints and all the dynamic forces that are going on within the college.”

Many of the bench scientists also mentioned having to lead their home department as well as off-campus facilities that were either extension stations or experiment stations. For some in this sample, this was a complicating factor in their leadership. One department head made the decision to move back into the ranks of faculty because of the issues he had with off-site facilities. He found himself “having to handle all of the professional development of the faculty members at the research and extension stations” without being anywhere close to the stations.

The work of the tripartite mission in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions is an important element of this study. This interaction between and among the three agencies adds complexity to an already complex job. The sample perceived that they are the only department heads who must deal with this added job stress. None of the department heads mentioned engineering colleges which often have similar experiences with the tripartite mission at a land-grant institution. A department head with 3-5 years of experience stated that “in the agriculture college, we have program that have a much more complex job I think, than the English department or the Economics department because we not only have the college, but we have two agencies.” This finding supports the work of Jones (2006). Via his research on deans and directors in colleges of agriculture, he concluded that the tripartite mission adds a layer of complexity onto the administrative leader.

Leadership Tasks of Department Heads

It can be concluded the department heads in this study conceptualized leadership not only as leading a group of individuals towards a common goal, but also as specific tasks. When they spoke of their leadership style, initiatives, or behaviors, specific tasks were offered as supporting examples. From these examples, the inductive sub-categories of *marching forward*, *shared vision*, *goals*, *storytelling*, *listening*, and *faculty success* emerged as important aspects of leadership for department heads. Understanding what tasks leaders see as a function of their leadership helps the researcher gain insight into how they conceptualize leadership. It also aids those who develop leadership training programs understand leadership training needs through the vantage point of the leaders themselves.

Marching forward.

Six out of ten of the department heads in this sample identified moving the department forward as a leadership skill that is imperative for a department head to possess. A department head with over twenty years of experience stated “real leadership comes in moving the organization forward into the future and that is where a department head has to have some skill sets and understanding.”

It can be concluded the constant need to move forward is important to the department heads interviewed. This finding is consistent with Huy (2001). In his study of middle managers, Huy (2001) concluded that one of the essential roles of a middle manager is to “keep the company moving forward” (p. 78). Leadership theory literature addresses the leader’s role in change by the continuum of transactional to transformational leadership (Howell & Avolio, 1993).

It can also be concluded the department heads in this sample have an internal locus of control when it comes to the change movement because they see change and moving the department forward as one of their responsibilities. They do not wait for someone else to initiate the change process. One department head stated that “looking to the future is one of the most

important leadership functions of this job.” Howell & Avolio (1993) avow it is the internal locus of control that aids the leader in becoming a more transformational leader. The transactional leadership model of change with crisis is not a model with which the department heads in this sample agree. The implications for this finding are that those who develop or implement leadership development programs for department heads should focus on the characteristics of a transformational leader in order for the department head to ignite change. As Connor (2004) found, transformational leadership has a positive impact on administration in colleges of agriculture.

Shared vision and goals.

It can be concluded that developing shared vision/goals is an important leadership function for the department heads in this sample. Eighty percent of the department heads interviewed said that developing and implementing a shared vision and/or shared goals was an essential leadership role of a department head. Five of the ten department heads qualified the shared vision conceptualization by adding that leaders must facilitate a shared and collective vision with faculty to be successful. A department head with less than a year of experience said that he did not believe in “building those goals myself, but building those goals as a team within the department.” This way of developing a vision is described by Senge (1990) as co-creating a vision. Senge (1990) goes on to say that co-creating is the best way to implement a shared vision.

It can be concluded that developing and implementing a shared vision and goals are important leadership tasks for a department head. Bowman (2002) lists engagement in the department and the development of the mission and vision of the department as key elements of departmental leadership. Spotauski and Carter (1993) studied department heads in agricultural education using the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and found that inspiring a shared vision was the lowest leadership practice identified by department heads. This could mean that department heads recognize the importance of shared visioning, but do not understand how to accomplish the shared vision. The implications for this finding include the need for education for department heads on how to develop a shared vision.

It can also be concluded that there is interconnectivity between moving forward and shared vision and goals for this sample. By building and implementing a shared vision or shared goals, the department marches forward towards that new idealized picture of the future. One department head stated that “academic leadership means moving the department and higher education as a whole forward in how it engages citizens and students.” By understanding the importance of building a shared vision, and then implementing the shared vision, leaders are able to take their organization to the next level (Senge, 1990).

Storytelling.

For the department heads in this sample, strategic planning, visioning, and goal setting all work together to tell the department’s story. Storytelling was identified by four of the ten department heads as an important leadership task and technique for advancing the departmental identity. It can be concluded, for this sample, that storytelling is a way to promote the departmental identity to internal and external constituencies. As a department head, “you’ve got to keep pulling people together and keep explaining what it is we’re all about” stated a department head with 3-4 years of experience.

The technique of storytelling is not only useful for leading the faculty and staff in the department, it is also a useful tool for communicating with the dean. Storytelling was also used in fundraising and communicating the story to other external constituencies. A department head with over twenty years of experience noted that the story must be accurate but show all aspects

of the department. Making sure the teaching, research, and extension stories are told but adding what the department does for students, the productivity of faculty and students, and the ties and impact on industry must also be told in order to gain the real sense of the departmental story.

Hecht (2004) notes that the responsibilities of a department head include internal communications, external communications and fundraising. It can be concluded for this sample, storytelling is a leadership task and skill that is an effective way to communicate with internal and external constituencies. For internal use, i.e. communicating with the dean and faculty, storytelling can be valuable to the department and the leader. When the same story is communicated to both factions, there is the sense of honesty and openness (Gmelch, & Miskin, 1993). Huy (2001) also notes the importance of communication for middle managers. The “webs of relationships” (p. 76) that the middle manager weaves leads to better communication between and among factions in the organizational system. Honesty and openness with the both factions lead to added trust in the leader (Bennis & Goldsmith, 2003).

It can also be concluded that fundraising is becoming a task of the department head. Hellawell and Hancock (2001) found that academic middle managers feel there is an increased expectation to be “at least as much resource managers and fund-raising entrepreneurs as they are academic leaders” (p. 191). The use of storytelling can be beneficial in fundraising, but department heads need to be taught how to develop, then convey the story of the department as well as be versed in fundraising methods (Tierney, 1999).

Facilitating Faculty Success.

It can be concluded that faculty play an important role in the leadership of departments for this sample. Faculty success was spontaneously given as an important leadership task for eight of the ten interviewed department heads. A department head with over twenty years of experience operationalized his position on faculty success by stating that a department head needs to create a collaborative climate and then, “the best thing you can do is get the hell out of their way, literally. Just get out of their way and let them do their job.”

This finding is consistent with the findings of Gmelch and Miskin (1993). Through a quantitative survey, they found that faculty development is perceived by department heads to be “their most important responsibility” (p. 5). Recruiting, selecting, and evaluating faculty as well as mentoring them and creating high morale and professional development opportunities for the faculty were high priorities for the department heads surveyed. The implication for this finding is the need for department heads to be well versed in the “soft skill” of human development as well as be a leader in the discipline. Those who select department heads should look for this skill in the people they interview.

Leadership Style

A department head with less than a year of experience stated that “there are different leadership styles and there are different times that are appropriate for different leadership styles. That is what makes this leadership thing so complicated.” Because understanding leadership styles is complicated, the broader theme of leadership style was sub-categorized into several inductive categories. These included identified styles, walk the walk, and pick the collective brains of faculty. Comprehending how leaders conceptualize their leadership style allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how the department head conceptualized the phenomenon of leadership. An identified leadership style is the framework for how the department head leads. This information could also be beneficial to those training faculty to be academic leaders. If there are certain leadership styles that are not identified as being important, it would not be beneficial to teach those approaches to leadership. This information is also

imperative to know for those who select department heads. Asking one to identify her leadership style tells not only what she believes, but also may allude to how much leadership training, education, and development that person has experienced.

Identified styles.

For this sample, it can be concluded that there is no one predominate self reported leadership style. While some department heads were specific and used theoretical leadership style terms in describing their leadership style, others offered generalized and popularized terms. Using a theoretical but also popularized typology of leadership style, three of the ten department heads described themselves as a servant leader. One of the department heads stated that he believes “you’re here on this earth to help people and that’s been the driving force and why I chose to become a department head.” Using Greenleaf’s (1977) definition of servant leadership, the choice of being a servant is what brings one to aspire to lead in an organization, all three department heads could be defined as a servant leader. It was the desire to serve the department, because of the benefits they had received from the department, which led them to lead. One department head said that he decided to become department head because he “just kind of felt like [he] owed something back.” It is also interesting to note that the three department heads who classified themselves as servant leaders were all bench scientists and had over five years of departmental leadership experience.

It can be concluded that, for this sample, the situation plays a role in the leader’s chosen leadership style. This is in alignment with contingency theory (Daft, 2002). “It is called contingency because it suggests that a leader’s effectiveness depends on how well the leader’s style fits the context...effective leadership is contingent on matching a leader’s style to the right theory” (Northouse, 2004, p. 75). Thirty percent of the department heads described their leadership style using other leadership theory terms. A department head with 1-2 years of experience was categorized by the researcher as a contingent leader. He relayed that “[faculty] can’t figure out my style totally because I come from different points at different times.” This situation as well as the follower dictated how this leader chose to lead. This is congruent with the definition of a leader who utilizes different types of contingency theory (Daft, 2002). Situational leaders diagnose the follower’s level of commitment and competency and then decide the best leadership behaviors to correspond to the follower (Northouse, 2004).

Another theoretical style was identified by a department head in this sample. A department head with 1-2 years of experience laughed as he said that he would “really like to be transformational” in his leadership, “it’s what I’m trying really, really hard to do.” However, he goes on to say that he also sees himself as a team leader, one that makes sure he is inclusive in decision making and makes time for the personal and professional development of his faculty. This description best matches the “team leader” behavioral style as described by Blake and Mouton (Northouse, 2004). A team leader is conscious of both the task and relationship aspects of his followers.

Another theoretical type of leadership style was identified by a department head with 5-6 years of experience. He describes himself as a charismatic and facilitative type of leader. Charismatic leaders are defined by House and Baetz (1979) as those leaders who “by the force of their personal abilities are capable of having profound and extraordinary effects on followers” (p. 399). The charismatic and the transformational leader lead social science departments.

The other four department heads did not name a specific style of leadership but explained how they see themselves leading an academic department. A department head with less than a year of experience described his leadership style as inclusive, honest, as open as possible, and

willing to make a decision and move forward. A former department head with 5-7 years of experience said that he found that leading by example was, in his mind, the best way to lead a department. A department head with 3-4 of years experience stated he was a “fairly casual leader” who does not “micromanage” but likes to “synthesize” the situation before he acts.

It can be concluded that there is not one uniform leadership style that works best for all department heads. Those who develop and evaluate academic leaders should keep this in mind. The one-size-fits-all theory of leadership does not and cannot apply to academic department heads (Lucas, 1994). It can also be concluded that half of the department heads in this sample have received enough leadership education to be able to identify their leadership style using theoretical terms. The implication is that the other half of the sample have not received enough leadership education to be able to use theoretical terms to identify their leadership style. This, again, is another concept that could be taught to department heads.

Model the way.

It can be concluded that congruence in words and actions as well as authenticity in your leadership style is important to the department heads in this sample. Eight of the ten department heads in the sample gave examples of how they would not ask their faculty or staff to do anything that they themselves were not willing to do. One department head noted that “there’s a great deal in academic leadership where you have to lead by example.” This leadership style is defined by Bennis and Goldsmith (2003) as congruence. George (2007) notes that congruence can also be categorized as consistency. Consistency is being aware of one’s actions and intentions and matching actions with espoused values. Kouzes and Posner (2002 & 2003) describe walking the walk as *modeling the way*. “Exemplary leaders know that if they want to gain commitment and achieve the highest standards, they must be models of the behavior they expect of others” (Kouzes & Posner, 2003, p. 73). It can be concluded that congruence in words and actions is an important leadership style for a department head.

Pick the collective brains of faculty.

All ten of the interviewed department heads spoke specifically about their approach to decision making. It can be concluded that the department heads in this sample want some level of faculty input in important departmental decisions. One department head said that for big decisions, “I rely on input from faculty. I try to engage faculty in discussion well in advance when I know there are some issues coming around.” Gaining faculty input into the decisions is a leadership decision. It is gaining that faculty buy-in that impacts the effectiveness of the decision (Austin, 1999). This can be related back to the importance of building a shared and collaborative vision and goals for the department. It can be concluded that the department heads in this sample are inclusive with their decision making. This has a direct impact on the department because a leader’s “decisions regarding various aspects of the organization shape the course of their organization” (Nahavandi, 2006, p. 276).

Leadership vs. Management

In an academic department, “you have to be able to manage and lead. You can’t just do one or the other” stated a department head with 5-6 years of experience. Kekale (1999) concurs with this finding. He stated that not only are department heads called to be a leader and a manager, but they are called to do so at the same time. It can be concluded that it is the marriage of leadership and management that makes the job difficult for the department heads in this study. Eight of the ten sampled department heads spoke of the “dailyness” of the job, meaning managing, getting in the way of being able to lead. This is consistent with the findings of Gmelch and Miskin (1993) who found that department heads become very involved with the day

to day operations of the department, and therefore lose site of the leadership tasks which must be accomplished to move the department forward toward the vision. Lucas (1994) separates the key functions of department heads into two categories; leadership or administration. He also stresses that in order to be effective as a leader, a department head must complete tasks that fall into both categories.

Being both a manager and a leader at the same time is a different perspective than one might believe after reading the works of Bennis. He repeatedly states that there is a clear-cut difference between leaders and managers. He states that having both is imperative, but the organization should not rely on a single person to inhabit both qualities (Bennis, 1989). Although theoretically, a separation of leader and manager is better for an organization, the department heads in this sample see their role as a leader and a manager. One department head concluded that if you couple management and leadership correctly, "it is very complementary."

It can be concluded that department heads in this sample consider themselves to be academic middle managers. A department head with 3-4 years of experience explains that he feels like a middle manager or a department head sandwich when he "catches it from the faculty when they don't like what's going on and catches it from the dean's office when they don't like what's going on." A department head sandwich is a colloquial phrase for the job type that Mintzberg (1989) defines as a middle manager. A middle manager is one who is in "a hierarchy of authority between the operating core and the administrative apex" (Mintzerg, 1989, p. 98). It can be concluded that it is being at the level of middle manager that this sample of department heads finds frustrating about their jobs. Along with keeping the department functioning, department heads are a "transmitter of core strategic values through the enactment of the role as mentor, coach, and guide" (Clegg & McAuley, 2005, p. 22).

Managing Human Capital

It can be concluded that managing human capital is an important leadership task for the department heads in this sample. All ten department heads stressed the importance of and sometimes frustration that stems from faculty and staff relations. One department head noted that leading is "about the people. Human capital is your greatest resource and if you can really understand that, then everything else sort of relates to it." Hiring, mentoring, and supporting faculty were mentioned repeatedly as essential leadership functions. The research of Wolverton et. al (1999) supports this finding. They found that managing human capital combines the department head tasks of resource management, leadership, and faculty development.

It can also be concluded that frustrations with people management is an important aspect of leading an academic department for this sample. The department head with over twenty years of experience avowed "what runs most department heads off is personnel management." The research of Bowman (2002) supports this conclusion. Bowman (2002) states that because most academic leaders are not trained in personnel management, they quickly become disenchanted with dealing with conflict and human issues that arise.

Hiring and mentoring faculty.

Eight of the ten department heads interviewed specifically mentioned the importance of hiring faculty as one of the leadership tasks of a department head. It can be concluded that, for this sample, deciding which faculty to hire is an important aspect of leading an academic department. Department heads must focus on more than just recruiting and hiring faculty; they must help guide them once they become part of the department. A department head with 5-6 years of experience said that it is more than just recruiting and hiring; you must "help them because they're going to achieve more than anybody can."

The research of Gmelch and Miskin (1993) supports both conclusions. They found that recruiting, selecting, and evaluating faculty as well as mentoring them and creating high morale and developmental opportunities are all high priorities for department heads. The implications for these findings suggest that those who train academic leaders must focus on hiring practices but also the theory of mentoring. Those who are hiring department heads should inquire about the hiring and mentoring philosophy of the candidate during the interview.

Sometimes they act worse than my kids.

As stated above, it can be concluded that dealing with human capital is an important aspect of leading a department for this sample. One department head noted that “as a department head, more than fifty percent of what you do is dealing with people.” Seven other department heads from this sample agreed or echoed that idea. The research of Moore and Rudd (2004) and Jones (2006) conclude that human skills as well as emotional intelligence are important skills for an academic leader in colleges of agriculture to possess.

It can also be concluded that human issues are sometimes problematic for the department heads in this study. A department head with 3-4 years of experience said that “sometimes, I think [faculty and staff] act worse than my kids.” Dealing with the autonomous and sometimes high-strung faculty is difficult. A department head with over twenty years of experience lamented that “as an administrator that cares about every one of these individuals, how do you get them untangled?” It is that statement that captures the significance of this theme. When those chosen to lead are usually chosen on research ability, how can they learn to “untangle” the human emotions of their followers? Jones (2006) found that human skills are the most important of the leadership skills needed in the job of academic leader. Leadership development can help department heads develop and have the human relation skills needed in order to be successful leaders.

It's not Like a Business

For this sample, leadership at the academic department head level is different than leading a business. One department head stated that “we’re an academic unit, an academic institution. We’re not a business.” Forty percent of the department heads interviewed spoke specifically about the difference between academia and the business world. This inductive theme is significant because the majority of leadership development programs geared toward academic leaders still focus on business model paradigms when creating and implementing their curriculum. The business model of leadership also takes into account that the leader has many power-bases at his disposal. They have the power to hire and fire those (reward and coercive power base) at will (Raven & French, 1958). Academic leaders often do not have these two power bases. “You set policies but in terms of a reward system; most academic institutions are like ours. With budget cuts and low pay increases, there isn’t a lot to be able to reward faculty with” stated a department head with 1-2 years of experience.

It can also be concluded that department heads in this sample often found it difficult to connect to leadership theories and practices of which they were informed, via books or formalized courses. For this sample it is because they see a disconnect from the business-based leadership theories and the actuality of their leadership functions in higher education. One department head stated that “one of the books from leadership training was from a business model and I found it absolutely useless.” The research of Bush (2003) supports this finding and conclusion. Bush states that there are several distinctions between leading in academia and leading in a for-profit paradigm. Power bases are one of the differences, but goal setting, money allocation, and knowledge of a product are also described by Bush (2003) as differences. There

is some transferability from one paradigm to the other, but the fundamental purposes of the two worlds are too different for a complete convergence of thought.

Herding Academic Cats

All ten department heads lamented about the difficulties of leading faculty, and some commented on their perceived lonesomeness as leaders. It can be concluded that, for this sample, leading faculty is a daunting and isolating task. A former department head noted that he felt that he “didn’t have any friends as a department head.” He relied on his spouse as a sounding board and confidant.

As some described academic leadership as herding cats, there was more to this theme than a simple colloquial statement. Fifty percent of the participants in the study used the term “herding cats.” One department head described herding academic cats by explaining, “you’re dealing with a group of independent faculty who are getting their own grant money, who are organizing their own program and you’re encouraging them to be creative and innovative. They have a great deal of academic freedom in terms of what they want to pursue” but you still have to keep everyone on the same page and marching forward.

It can be concluded, for this sample, the influencing factor of faculty autonomy coupled with the lack of a coercive or reward power base afforded to the department head, a different strategy must be utilized to lead (herd) faculty and move the department forward toward the shared vision and goals. Gaining faculty trust by being a credible, consistent, and congruent leader, obtaining faculty buy-in by co-creating a vision, and gaining faculty buy-in when making decisions are all ways that can be utilized by the department head to lead faculty. As one department head stated, “if you don’t get faculty buy-in, it’s not going to work.”

Implications

Academic departments are the building blocks of higher education’s academic structure (Rosovsky, 1990). Because of this, it is imperative that the leaders of this building block be effective in their leading. In order for academic leaders to be successful, they must understand the complex phenomenon of leadership. As one department head in this study noted, “you don’t take anyone off the street and put them in here and have them make decisions that effect seventy people’s lives.” Since a department head is charged with leading and managing faculty, staff, and students, it becomes even more imperative that the department head be aware of and understand the phenomenon of leadership.

For the professorate, scholarship, teaching, and service have been identified as essential functions for success as a faculty member (Boyer, 1990). Because of the information garnered from this generative study, a more in depth look at the phenomenon of leadership at the department head level in colleges of agriculture, faculty who teach leadership in colleges of agriculture can gain a more complete understanding of leadership as an academic middle manager. Service to the college for leadership educators could include leadership training, education, and development for current, incoming, or aspiring department heads. Service, for leadership educators, could also include aiding those who provide leadership education for the college.

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