Towards a shared understanding of leadership behaviour at an Australian university

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Abstract

Universities develop strategic plans to which both organisational and individual efforts should be aligned. Appropriate leadership is critical to the successful achievement of an institution's strategy. Most institutions offer their staff a range of leadership development programs to ensure the effectiveness of their managers and leaders. Logic suggests that such programs should also align with the strategic direction of the institution.

This paper discusses a recent research project at a 'New Generation' Australian university designed to ascertain whether there was a shared understanding of the leadership behaviours encouraged, practised and rewarded by the university amongst academic and professional (general) staff in leadership/management roles. The data indicated that managers are more concerned with the interpersonal relationships in their practice of leadership ('how') whereas the university's executives appear to be more concerned with rewarding leadership outcomes ('what'). A noticeable feature of the survey data was that many managers were unclear about, or had a cynical attitude to, the leadership behaviour encouraged and rewarded by the institution. However, there was strong support for utilising professional development programs to improve the understanding and practice of leadership. Likewise there was overwhelming support for the inclusion of the institution's most senior leaders as facilitators of leadership development activities.

The study highlighted the need for the University to identify, articulate and reinforce by its reward systems a cogent leadership philosophy and associated behaviours. In addition, the adoption of the "teaching organisation" approach was suggested for leadership development programs. Finally, the paper highlights the need to develop a research capacity within university human resource departments as an emerging opportunity for institutional researchers.

Introduction

Today there is an increasing focus on leadership, particularly the leadership of large organisations including publicly-funded institutions such as universities. A "top 10 management guru", Jay Conger, is cited as saying "Leadership has a lot to do with longer-range focus and it's more strategic [than management]" . Hence at all organisational levels, people in leadership roles influence others to achieve their organisation's strategic objectives .

In an increasingly global, market-driven economy universities seek to find a competitive edge in order to attract student income and scarce research funding. Like most organisations, universities develop strategic plans to which both organisational and individual efforts should be aligned. Such plans draw on research and analysis of multiple factors including demographic trends, business needs, local and overseas demand for higher education and government policies. Given the present state of the tertiary education 'market' and the range of factors likely to influence the future prosperity of universities, it is imperative that current and future leaders have the requisite skills, knowledge and abilities to allow them to assist their institutions to meet future challenges.

Since leadership contributes to the achievement of the institution's strategic objectives then it may be assumed that in a successful university leaders need to have a shared understanding of the leadership behaviour that underpins that achievement. Thus most institutions offer their staff a range of leadership development programs to develop the effectiveness of their managers and leaders. Such development programs should align with the strategic direction of the institution.

Background

Universities are significant providers of leadership education so it is logical to expect that university leaders 'practise what they preach' when it comes to leadership, and particularly the leadership development of their staff. But is that the case? This paper draws upon a 2005 research project designed to ascertain the extent to which a shared understanding and practice of desired leadership behaviour was apparent in one university – a 'New Generation' university located in Perth, Western Australia. The university was formed in the early 1990s by the amalgamation of several former colleges of advanced education (some of which had earlier been long-established teachers' colleges). With over 21,000 students and a full-time equivalent of more than 1800 employees, including approximately 500 staff in management or supervisory roles, the institution can be considered a large organisation.

Gap analysis of successive staff surveys indicated that leadership is a priority area and a number of other identified gaps were attributed to the (lack of) exercise of leadership and management skills and behaviours. An examination of exit interviews conducted with departing staff found that 29 per cent directly indicated their decision to leave was related to dissatisfaction with the university, their job, interpersonal conflict (with management), or manager/supervisor issues. A further 13 per cent of departing staff indicated within their interview that management/leadership issues were of concern to them (and one can assume that such concerns contributed to their decision to leave). Thus the exercise of leadership may have directly or indirectly contributed to 42 per cent of staff departures – a compelling reason to examine how leadership skills and behaviours are developed at the university.

The researcher is the professional development officer (PDO) primarily responsible for developing, managing and facilitating university's leadership and management development programs. The lack of clearly articulated, rewarded leadership behaviours created uncertainty for the PDO as to what leadership approaches should be incorporated within development programs. Thus the action research project was designed to answer the following primary questions:

- What, if any, leadership theories or approaches guide the practice of leadership at the university?

- What differences in leadership behaviour are evident among leaders at different (hierarchical) levels?

- What leadership development approach is most likely to encourage a shared understanding, and practice, of the institution's desired leadership behaviours?

This paper describes the research undertaken to answer those questions. A brief summary of the key attributes of a number of 'popular' theories and/or approaches in the leadership literature is first presented, followed by a description of the research design, the key findings of the study and, finally, recommendations for further research.

Leadership Theories

There is an eclectic range of competing and/or complementary theories to explain what leadership 'is' or how leadership is 'done'. Table 1 describes the key attributes of a selection of significant leadership theories discussed in the leadership literature. Although not all theories are represented, the table is broadly representative of the range of leadership theories. Numerous disciplines have contributed to the development of leadership theories – organisational behaviour, management, psychology, and sociology to name a few. Researchers have not found universal traits or behaviours common to all successful leaders .

For those outside of academic leadership and management research areas, such as many leadership developers and staff in leadership roles, it can be difficult to conceptualise the spectrum of leadership theories, models and approaches. The model below (Figure 1) was developed to visually represent a range of leadership theories. Three theory classifications generally held in common by researchers – trait, behavioural and contingency – are grouped as 'classical' theories. A range of contemporary leadership approaches has been identified as "New Leadership Theories" . As the model depicts, some theories are more focussed on the leader's personality whilst others are more focussed on the leader's behaviour and the

relationship between leader and followers. Figure 1 highlights five broad divisions of leadership theory – (1) Classical – leader focussed, (2) Classical – behaviour/relationship focussed, (3) New Leadership – leader focussed, (4) New Leadership – behaviour/relationship focussed, and (5) encompassing theories (servant leadership and integral leadership).

As with the general theories of leadership there are multiple approaches and models to describe leadership in academic settings, with some researchers suggesting that corporate or management leadership approaches should not be generalised as being applicable in universities . Thus there may be resistance from academic staff in particular when endeavouring to apply leadership constructs to university leaders. However there is sufficient support in the literature to suggest that transformational leadership and approaches that respect and value followers (such as value based, principle centred or servant leadership) describe successful leadership in academic institutions .

Leadership Development

Muczyk and Adler (2002) make an interesting observation when they conclude that "without a clear understanding of the many competing leadership frameworks – a daunting challenge, indeed – managers are limited in adequately making sense of what to do and when to do it"   . This suggests that managers/leaders and those responsible for developing the leadership capacity of university managers with leadership responsibilities (whether academic or administrative staff) need to understand not only the various leadership constructs but also the effective options for providing professional development for current and aspiring leaders. Some commentators, such as Gilley & Maycunich , suggest that since the human resource development approach emphasises the need for professional development to be aligned to organisational strategy, it is the most effective approach to developing an organisation's staff.

An emerging development approach is the "Teaching Organisation" which is seen as the next step from the "learning organisation" . The teaching organisation approach provides additional opportunities for top leaders to personally influence their organisation's culture by facilitating leadership development activities. Covey notes that "executives now realize that explicit teaching ... is one of their *major* [italics added] responsibilities".[1]

[1] The teaching organisation's basic principles are described by Tichy as:

First, leaders with a proven track record of success take direct responsibility for the development of other leaders

Second, leaders who develop other leaders have teachable points of view in the specific areas of ideas, values and something that I call E3 – emotional energy and edge. Winning leaders and teachers have ideas that they can articulate and teach to others about both how to make the organisation successful in the marketplace and how to develop other leaders.

Third, leaders embody their teachable points of view in living stories. They tell stories about their pasts that explain their learning experiences and their beliefs. And they create stories about the future of their organisations that engage others both emotionally and intellectually to attain the winning future that they describe.

Finally, because winning leaders invest a considerable amount of time in developing other leaders, they have well-defined methodologies and thoroughly developed coaching and teaching techniques. Among these is a willingness to admit mistakes and show vulnerability in order to serve as effective role models for others .

Figure 1. Model of leadership theories
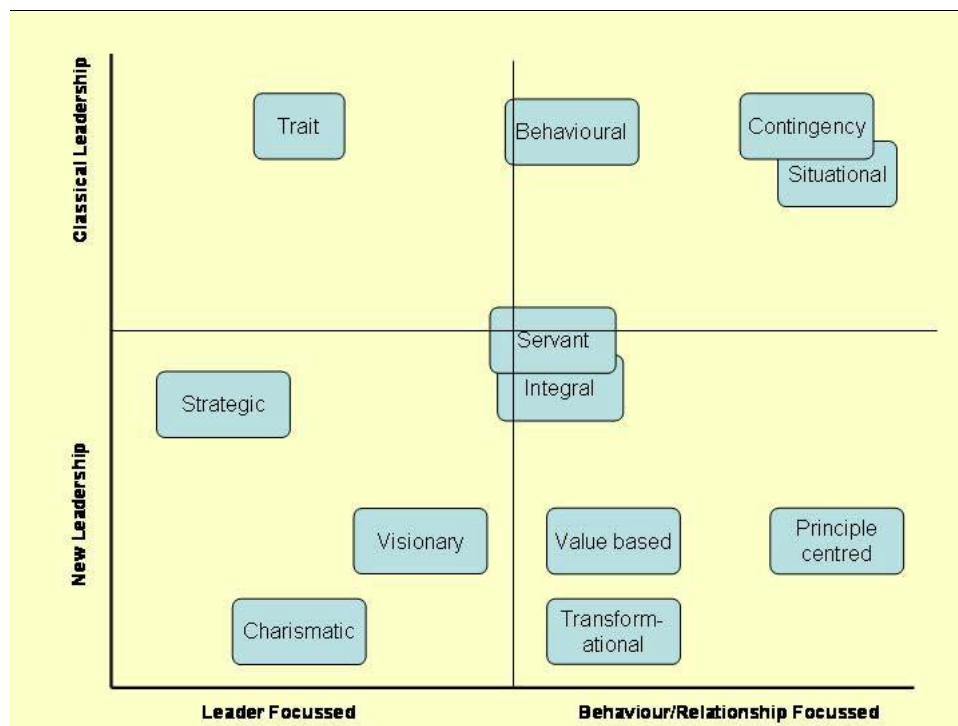
Methodology

The study design was based on the Human Performance Technology Model (HPT Model – see Figure 2 below) – a systems-based model that provides a "comprehensive approach to improving job performance" . The performance analysis and cause analysis phases of the HPT Model were the primary foci for the study.

Data was sought from leaders at all levels of the university including chancellery members, administrative directors, heads of schools, and other mid to lower-level academic and administrative leaders, i.e. a vertical slice through the organisation or stratified sampling. A non-probability sampling method was utilised by the researcher to select potential respondents deemed representative of each group. Fogelman describes this method as "purposive or judgemental sampling… [where] the researcher applies his/her experience and judgement to select cases which are representative or typical" . Thus 202 leaders dispersed throughout the organisation were invited to respond to a questionnaire.

Fifty-seven completed questionnaires were returned – a 28 per cent response. Only one chancellery level response was received and the data from that returned questionnaire was subsequently included with the HEW 10 Director data in order to protect the respondent's identity. Responses from program directors, course coordinators, unit coordinators and "academic others" were merged during the data analysis stage to provide more meaningful analysis between hierarchical academic levels. Responses were analysed for demographic trends, common themes (content analysis) and relatedness to the leadership literature.

Table 1. Leadership Attributes

Leadership theory	Attributes/Key elements	
Trait	Dominance	Integrity
	High energy	Intelligence (above-average) & Emotional
	Self-Confidence	intelligence
	Locus of control	Flexibility
	Stability	Sensitivity to others
Behavioural	Concern for production/ task vs.	Directive vs.
	Concern for people	Participative
Contingency – Fielder's Contingency Model	Leader-member relations Task structure	Position power
Situational – SL II	Directing Coaching	Supporting Delegating
Transformational * **	Trust* Credibility* Inspirational vision**	Charisma (dynamic personality)** Crisis situation** Dramatic acts**
Charismatic	Visionary	Image building
	Frame alignment	Exceptional
	Empowering	Risk-taking
	Role modelling	Intellectual stimulation
Visionary	Model the way	Enable others to act
	Inspire a shared vision	Encourage the heart
	Challenge the process	
Strategic	Well defined objectives	Formal task assignments
	Opportunities for participation	Objective-oriented budgetary allocations
	Delegation of authority	
Value Based	A mission that matters	Decision maker
	Big thinker	Wise use of power
	Ethical	Communicator
	Change master	Team builder
	Sensitive of others	Courageous
	Risk taker	Committed
Principle Centred	Trustworthiness at the personal level	Empowerment at the management level
	Trust at the interpersonal level	Alignment at the organisational level
Servant	Vision	Credibility
	Honesty	Competence
	Integrity	Stewardship
	Trust	Visibility
	Service	Influence
	Modelling	Persuasion
	Pioneering	Listening
	Appreciation of others	Encouragement
	Empowerment	Teaching
	Communication	Delegation
Integral	Self-knowledge	Meaning-making
	Peak performance	Strategy & design

Figure 2. Human Performance Technology Model
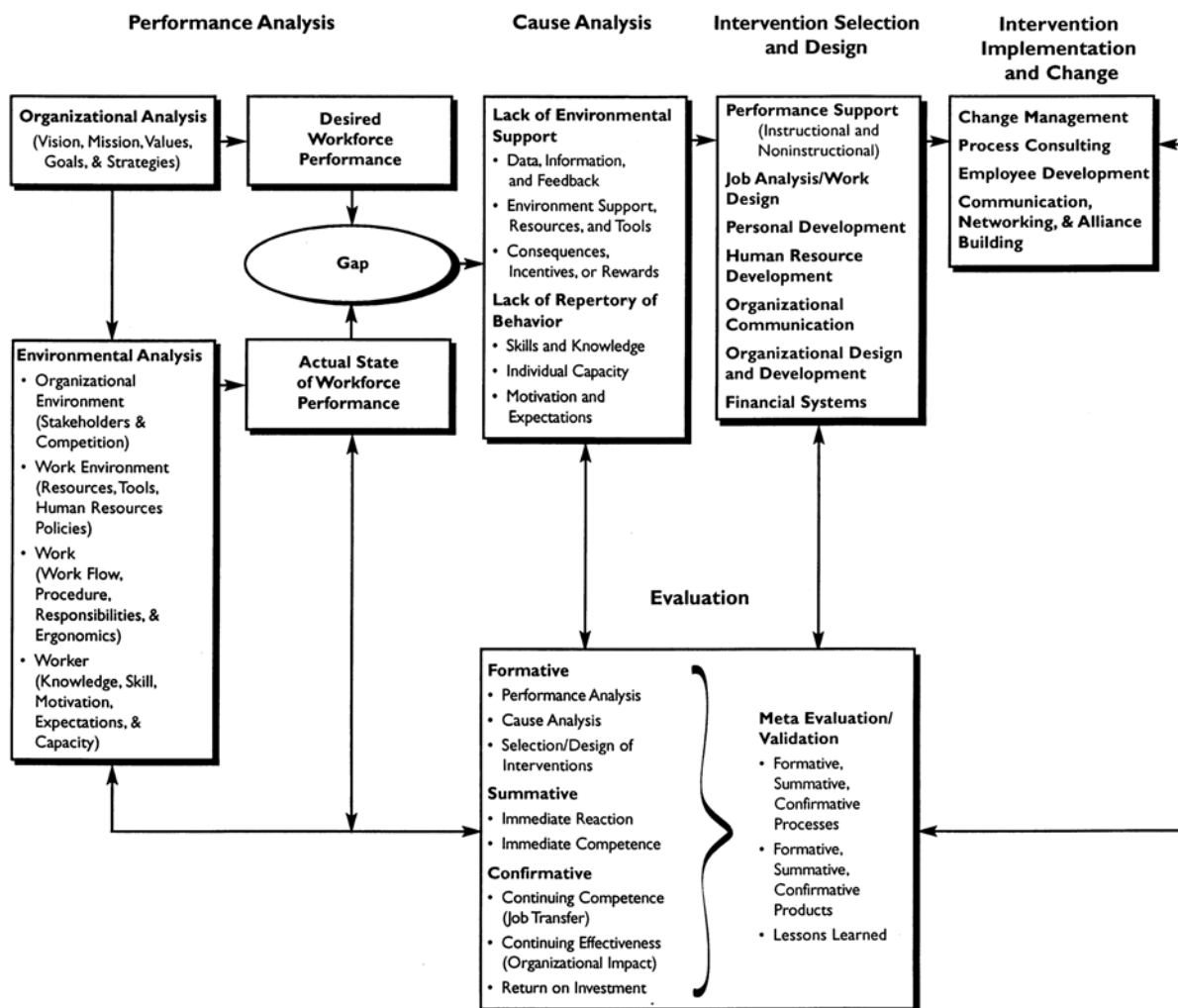
Findings

As reported in Table 2, almost 30 per cent of respondents were general staff managers, supervisors or professionals, whilst there was almost equal representation from heads of schools/associate deans and program directors/course coordinators (approximately 17 per cent and 16 per cent respectively).

Table 2. Respondents by Role

n = 57	Academic Roles					General Staff Roles		
Role	Chanc-ellery	Head of School/ Assoc Dean	Program Director/ Course Coord	Unit Coord	Acad Other	HEW 10 Director	HEW 10 Manager	HEW 5-9 Manager/ Profess-ional
Frequency	1	10	9	1	3	3	13	17
Percentage	1.8	17.5	15.7	1.8	5.3	5.3	22.8	29.8

Question 1: What leadership philosophy guides the practice of leadership?

It is apparent that no single philosophy, style or theory guides the practice of leaders at the institution. As Table 3 highlights, the themes from the data collected suggest that leaders had little difficulty in identifying their 'personal' leadership approach and that of an 'ideal' manager. Between one third and half of the respondents identified with the five of the highest ranked response themes for personal leadership practice and 30 to 58 percent of respondents identified with the five highest ranked themes for the ideal manager question. The lack of clarity as to the leadership behaviours 'encouraged' by the university is evident by the fact that the most frequently identified behaviour (visionary/strategic) was identified by only one in five (21 per cent) respondents with almost the same number of respondents (20 per cent) identifying collegial and play the game as encouraged behaviours. There is a similar lack of clarity as to 'rewarded' leadership behaviours as highlighted by the fact that only 28 per cent of respondents identified the highest ranked theme.

The data from the study demonstrate there is a significant gap between the leadership behaviours valued by respondents (as demonstrated by responses referring to their personal leadership styles and the leadership behaviours of an ideal manager) and the leadership behaviours the respondents identify that are in evidence at an institutional level (encouraged and rewarded behaviour in particular).

Although respondents described 'captain-coach' and 'collegial' as the two leadership styles that they and their manager most often display, less than 20 per cent of the respondents reported that the institution encouraged these same behaviours. The collegial and captain-coach styles have similar characteristics – an open and supportive approach to leadership – yet neither leadership style was identified as behaviour rewarded by the institution.[2]

**Table 3. Personal versus Institutional Leadership Behaviour at ECU**

Personal behaviour		Institutional behaviour		
Personal (n = 57)	Ideal (n = 57)	Manager (n = 57)	Encouraged (n = 56)	Rewarded (n = 57)
Captain-coach (50.9%)	Captain-coach (57.9%)	Captain-coach (53.6%)	Visionary/ strategic (21.4%)	Outcomes (28.1%)
Collegial (47.4%)	Good communication (43.9%)	Collegial (32.1%)	Collegial (19.6%)	Service, Professionalism & Enterprise (26.3%)
By example (40.4%)	Credible (43.9%)	Credible (21.4%)	'Play the game' (19.6%)	'Play the game' (21.1%)
Credible (38.6%)	Visionary/ strategic (42.1%)	Visionary/ strategic (21.4%)	Captain-coach (16.1%)	Strategic alignment (14.0%)
Good communication (33.3%)	Collegial (29.8%)	Good communication (19.6%)	Credible (14.3%)	Risk minimisation (12.3%)

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[2] "Captain-coach leadership" is a term described in Hubbard, Samuel, Heap, & Cocks identifying the preferred leadership style found in "winning" Australian organisations. Captain-coach leaders "exhort and encourage" (coach) their staff and support their staff and share the work (captain) – "a very egalitarian view of leadership" according to the authors . Questionnaire responses that used words and terms such as "supportive", "leadership alongside the team", "encouraging people to work together and support each other", providing guidance and encouragement", "Commitment, not control" and "empowering" were categorised as captain-coach.

A collegial style of leadership is seen as the "traditional" form of university leadership but is reportedly a declining leadership style in 'Enterprise Universities' . Respondent descriptions such as "collegial", "participative", "democratic", "seeking consensus" and "collaborative" were coded as the collegial leadership style.

The inference is that the respondents believe there is little connection between the leadership styles or behaviours they employ and the leadership behaviour rewarded at the university. The data indicate the respondents are more concerned with the interpersonal relationships in their practice of leadership ('how') whereas they identify that the University is more concerned with rewarding the outcomes of leadership ('what'). Drawing on the summary of leadership attributes described at Table 1 above, Figure 3 highlights the gap between personal and ideal leadership practice and the behaviours perceived as being rewarded by the institution.

Figure 3. Practiced and Rewarded Leadership Philosophies
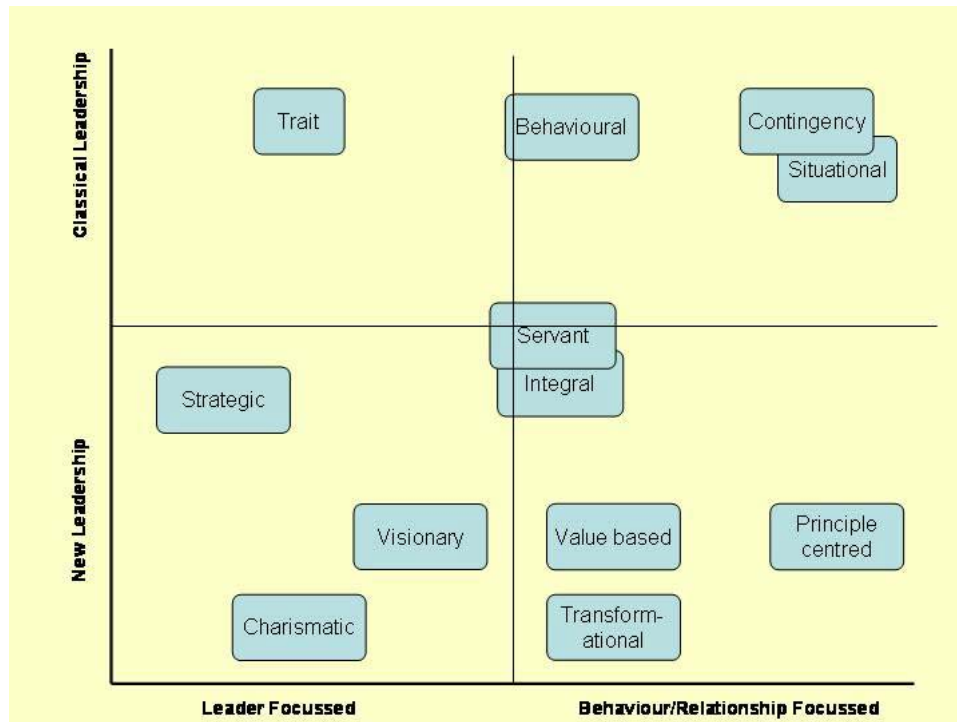
Evidence from this study indicates strong support by the institution's managers for an open and supportive leadership approach. Thus there is a strong case to develop and encourage an organisational-wide leadership philosophy that fosters such positive attributes and that also ensures that leadership practice is aligned to the University's strategic direction. In turn, this will likely require the executive leadership group to (i) more fully engage with staff to, in the words of Kouzes and Posner, "inspire a shared vision" of the future and (ii) acknowledge and reward those who adopt the University's leadership philosophy.

Reviewing the leadership attributes of the leadership approaches cited at Table 1, it is suggested that Visionary; Value Based; Principle Centred; Servant; and possibly, Integral Leadership could be investigated with a view to adopting one or more theoretical approaches. On face value, Servant Leadership appears to offer a broad set of attributes that could be adopted by the institution with positive benefits . Originally developed by Robert Greenleaf (1904 – 1990), servant-leadership is, in reality, a philosophy or modus operandi of those who ascribe to the theory. Greenleaf advocated the application of servant leadership within universities.

Key finding 1: executive management should identify and clearly articulate an organisational-wide leadership philosophy – such as Servant Leadership – that provides a positive, shared understanding for interpersonal relationships and inspires staff to achieve the institution's vision and mission.

There are three further conclusions from the aggregated data. Firstly that the leaders and managers in the sample see their line managers' leadership behaviour as similar to that of the ideal (the same five highest ranked themes were identified but with the rankings for good communication and collegial reversed). Secondly, fewer respondents identify the highest ranked rewarded themes compared to the highest ranked encouraged themes and fewer respondents identify the highest ranked encouraged themes compared to the

highest ranked themes describing their managers' leadership behaviour (i.e. there is less clarity around the leadership behaviours the institution really encourages and then rewards).

Thirdly, the encouraged behaviour themes suggest that the respondents feel that the university's leaders want them to engage in strong interpersonal relationships within a strategic leadership paradigm but yet almost 20 per cent of all respondents (the same percentage of respondents as those identifying the collegial theme) identified somewhat cynically that a 'play the game'[3] approach was similarly encouraged by the university which, no doubt, results in a lack of a shared understanding as to what leadership behaviour is *really* encouraged.

Thus the reality of personal leadership behaviour and that of the respondents' managers is somewhat different to the institutional rhetoric as to encouraged leadership behaviour and even more markedly different to rewarded behaviour. The reason for such a gap between the rhetoric and the reality is unclear from the data. However it is apparent that the institution's executive management would do well to clearly articulate the behaviour they desire of their subordinate leaders and then ensure that there are, in turn, clearly articulated and transparent links between the encouraged behaviour and that rewarded by the university.

Key finding 2: That executive management identify, articulate and encourage the leadership behaviour that will be consistently rewarded across the University.

If key finding 1 is adopted it is likely that appropriate leadership behaviour will be clearly evident – the challenge will be in ensuring the behaviour is consistently rewarded.

Question 2: What differences in leadership behaviour are evident among leaders at different (hierarchical) levels?

To enable more convenient analysis, respondents were classified into five distinct sub-groups – two academic groups (heads of school/associate deans and academic managers) and three professional, or general staff, groups (HEW 10 directors, HEW 10 managers and HEW5-9 managers/professionals). Given the emphasis of the study was to determine if a shared understanding of leadership behaviour was evident, the following paragraphs focus on responses identifying encouraged and rewarded behaviour.

Table 4 summarises the three highest ranked response themes regarding encouraged and rewarded leadership behaviour as reported by academic leaders. Compared to heads of school and associate deans, academic managers appear to have a cynical view of the leadership behaviour encouraged by the institution. The encouraged behaviour identified by the largest number of academic managers was 'play the game' (38 per cent compared to 20.0 per cent of heads of school and associate deans). Since almost two in five academic managers hold such a negative view the researcher believes that the university's executives must take steps to ensure more positive and transparent behaviours are consistently encouraged and rewarded (as suggested by *Recommendation 2* above).

The increased number of themes by a lower percentage of academic managers suggests this group is less certain of the leadership behaviours encouraged by the institution. Of concern is that 30 per cent of heads of school and associate deans and 15 per cent of academic managers responses indicated that could not identify the encouraged leadership behaviours.

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[3] The "play the game" theme emerged from responses to Questions 10 and 11 of the questionnaire and refers to the way the University's internal politics can be used to one's advantage. Respondents making such responses appeared to have a cynical view of how ECU encourages and rewards leadership behaviour. Examples of responses include "toeing the party line goes a long way", "I have seen corrupt leaders "get away with it", and laissez-faire leaders abdicate responsibility and still get paid", "those behaviours that don't rock the boat", "compliancy", "in the past my perception has been that you have to 'tow the line' if you ever want promotion", "small minded and full of personal agendas", "promotion by number", "the rumour [is] that they are moved up to higher positions especially if they have been difficult", "loud confident leaders, people who speak up", "loyalty to the organisation and 'playing the politics'", "blowing your own trumpet (even when it is not deserved)", "must be a 'team player' i.e. not disagree", and "cronyism".

Whereas academic managers appear to have ambivalence towards encouraged behaviour, they appear to have far more clarity as to what behaviour is rewarded with their highest ranked themes almost the same (although in a different order) as their heads of school and associate dean superiors. At least one in five of both groups of academic leaders identified that 'play the game' behaviour is rewarded by the university.

Overall, there appears to be a reasonable alignment between the views of both academic leader groups when it comes to their personal leadership practice, the practices of their managers and the practices of an ideal manager. As discussed above, balancing the ideal practices appears to equally difficult for both groups. The area where there are the most differences among academic leaders at different (hierarchical) levels is their understanding of the leadership behaviour the university *really* encourages.

Table 5 summarises the three highest ranked response themes regarding encouraged and rewarded leadership behaviour as reported by professional staff. The largest number (41 per cent) of HEW 5-9 managers' encouraged behaviour responses were categorised as 'don't know' (as did 25 per cent of HEW 10 managers) and almost a quarter as "play the game".

In a similar vein, albeit less pronounced, HEW 10 managers' equal third ranked rewarded behaviour themes included 'don't know', "play the game' and 'none' – reinforcing the researcher's conclusion that an ambivalent or, possibly, a cynical attitude to leadership behaviour is present amongst many professional staff. Another feature of the data is that only two of the four directors agreed on a single 'encouraged' behaviour and there was no agreement at all amongst directors as to rewarded behaviour.

Table 4. Academic Leaders: Encouraged and Rewarded Leadership Behaviour

Heads of school/ associate deans' view (n = 10)		Academic managers' view (n = 13)	
Encouraged behaviour	Rewarded behaviour	Encouraged behaviour	Rewarded behaviour
Visionary/strategic (40.0%)	Outcomes (50.0%)	'Play the game' (38.5%)	Outcomes (38.5%)
Collegial (30.0%)	Risk minimisation (40%)	Visionary/strategic (23.1%)	SPE (Incl grants/ income) (38.5%)
Don't know (30.0%)	'Play the game' (20.0%)	Credible (23.1%)	Strategic alignment (30.8%)
Develops staff (20.0%)	SPE[4] (Incl grants/ income) (20.0%)	Collegial (15.4%)	'Play the game' (23.1%)
Controlling (20.0%)	Strategic alignment (20.0%)	Controlling (15.4%)	
'Play the game' (20.0%)		Good communication (15.4%)	
		Captain-coach (15.4%)	
		Don't know (15.4%)	

The researcher's conclusion from the professional staff data is that there are more differences in, and views of, leadership behaviour amongst the various hierarchical levels of professional staff than there are amongst academic staff. However, the differences reinforce the researcher's view that the university must take steps to (i) identify and clearly articulate an organisational-wide leadership philosophy (as per key finding 1) and (ii) ensure more positive and transparent behaviours are consistently encouraged and rewarded (key finding 2).

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[4] SPE refers to Service, Professionalism and Enterprise, the studied university's three strategic themes. Responses mentioning income generation activities and the winning of research grants (both "enterprise" related activities) were also included with SPE. Some respondents mentioned the vice-chancellor's annual awards for Service, Professionalism and Enterprise.

Table 5. Professional Staff: Encouraged and Rewarded Leadership Behaviour

HEW 10 directors' view (n = 4)		HEW 10 managers' view (n = 13)		HEW 5-9 managers/professionals' view (n = 17)	
Encouraged behaviour	Rewarded behaviour	Encouraged behaviour	Rewarded behaviour	Encouraged behaviour	Rewarded behaviour
Visionary/ strategic (50.0%)	*	Collegial (33.3%)	Outcomes (30.8%)	Don't know (41.2%)	Don't know (29.4%)
		Don't know (25.0%)	SPE (Incl grants/ income) (23.1%)	Captain-coach (23.5%)	'Play the game' (23.5%)
			'Play the game' 15.4%)	Credible (23.5%)	Outcomes (11.8%)
			Efficiency (15.4%)	'Play the game' (23.5%)	
			None (15.4%)	Visionary/ strategic (11.8%)	
			Don't know (15.4%)	Develops staff (11.8%)	
* No theme was identified by two or more respondents					

Question 3: What leadership development approach is most likely to encourage a shared understanding, and practice, of desired leadership behaviours?

Respondents provided suggestions on how to improve leadership behaviour and also leadership development approaches that could be implemented at the institution. The three most identified themes were (1) almost 36 per cent of the survey respondents suggested *developing staff* would improve leadership behaviour; (2) 28 per cent suggested there is a need to develop a *shared understanding* of the university's requirements and (3) 21 per cent suggested that the institution *align individual effectiveness and the university's performance management system with promotion*. These three suggestions underscore the need for the university to identify, articulate and reinforce by its reward systems a cogent leadership philosophy and associated behaviours as per key findings 1 and 2 above. Once an underlying leadership philosophy is selected leaders at all levels and development specialists can develop strategies to assist with embedding the philosophy and behaviours amongst the university's managers and staff.

It is apparent from the survey data that the provision of appropriate professional development programs is seen as the most effective method to provide leadership development – 63 per cent of respondents supported this approach with a further 19 per cent suggesting mentoring and the modelling of the University's 'best' leaders as alternative development approaches. Eighty-six per cent of respondents supported the notion that the university's chancellery level and other senior managers becoming involved in facilitating leadership development workshops. Such high-level involvement will, no doubt, allow the university's most senior leaders to model desired leadership behaviour.

The strong support for including executive-level leaders as leadership development program facilitators is consistent with the "Teaching Organisation" approach discussed earlier in this paper. As previously mentioned, the teaching organisation approach provides an opportunity for top leaders to personally influence the organisation's culture.

The underlying values of teaching organisation approach complement the relationship-based leadership philosophies (Visionary; Value Based; Principle Centred; and Servant Leadership) discussed in connection with key finding 1. And, as an educational institution, there is a 'natural' fit between the organisation's teaching focus as its core business and adopting a similar approach to developing its current and future leaders. Further, the institution's professional development unit already invites a number of the university's executive and senior leaders as subject matter expert presenters for certain leadership development activities, thus fully implementing the teaching organisation approach would likely be seen by the university community as an incremental step rather than a radical change.

Key finding 3: the "teaching organisation" approach should be implemented and thus include the University's most senior leaders as facilitators (with appropriate training and/or support from professional development staff) of development activities for leaders at all levels.

Of course, the adoption of the teaching organisation approach does not preclude the use of other leadership development approaches and tools. The Situational Leadership model, for instance, lends itself as an excellent tool for assisting leaders modify their personal approach based on the developmental level of each of their subordinates.

Further Recommendations and Research

Leadership behaviour

Given the exploratory nature of this project there is scope to continue the research into leadership practice within the studied university. In particular, it is recommended that ongoing research be conducted into intergenerational and gender differences in leadership behaviour. Such research can guide the development and use of appropriate activities and tools so as to enhance the longer-term organisational sustainability and individual success of leaders.

In addition, it is recommended that this research be extended to examine the Australian university sector as a whole to (a) ascertain if the data pertaining to this study is generaliseable across the sector and (b) advance the body of leadership knowledge within the university context.

Institutional research

In the current turbulent higher education environment the performance of staff is critical to the achievement of an institution's strategic goals. Hence there should be an increased emphasis on internal human resource management focussed research that contributes to the organisation's planning and other strategically aligned activities. Indeed, in a paper presented at the recent Association of Commonwealth Universities Human Resource Management (HRM) conference Billsberry and Marsh argue that a primary reason why university HRM departments should develop their institutional research capacity is "to provide an understanding of work in the university that senior managers can use in their decision-making". However, judging by a review of the Australasian Association of Institutional Research (AAIR) publications website it appears that little, if any, institutional-level human resource management research is presently being conducted. This paper may well be a "first" for the AAIR Forums.

As the present leadership study demonstrates, rigorous, well-designed qualitative human resource management-based research has the capacity to contribute meaningful data leading to the development of tactical interventions that support an institution's strategy. Proven, systems-based models such as the HPT Model provide institutional researchers a framework for examining staff-related performance matters at an individual, team and organisational level. Are we, as institutional researchers, up to the challenge?

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