Leadership orientations of an educational leader in a private university in Malaysia

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Abstract

This study used Bolman and Deal’s (2008) framework to examine the leadership orientations of a dean of a private university in Malaysia. The LOS-self instrument was administered to the dean while the LOS-other instrument was administered to 35 of the dean’s staff reporting directly to her. Results show that the dean perceived her leadership orientations slightly different compared to her staff. Gender, age, academic qualification, current position held, number of years spent in their current job and managerial experience did not cause any significant differences in outcomes of the study. The dean exhibited two frames, which implies that it is necessary for future deans to be trained for leadership skill to meet the growing demands of the job.

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1. Introduction

Research on leadership has been multi-dimensional in nature where evaluation is made based on different perspectives (Sergiovanni, 1984; Bolman & Deal, 1984; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Covey, 1989; Bennis, 1995). According to Hoy and Miskel (2001) leadership is referred to as the ability to support and enable a group of people to accomplish a common task. Yukl (1998) expresses the view of leadership as “a social process” in which group members may influence the selection of goals, processes, and outcomes, and may even reshape the nature of power relationships within the organization.

This study is carried out since research on leadership of a dean, a key management position within today’s universities, which is still rather limited. Much of the research carried out using the Bolman and Deal four-frame model (1984, 2003 & 2008) has been concentrated in universities within the United States. There is limited literature on research carried out in private universities in Malaysia using this model. This research hopes to fill the gap found in the existing research and literature on dean’s leadership styles within private universities in Malaysia. Past research conducted on frame preference in relationship to leadership effectiveness by Bolman and Deal (1991) show that managers often use only one or two frames, but effective leaders use three or more frames (multi-frames). This model has proven how leaders’ thinking relates to leadership effectiveness, and that a multi-frame orientation yields the most effective leaders.

Besides that, much of the research carried out in the past has only utilized Bolman and Deal’s (1990) Leadership Orientation Survey (LOS-self) instrument. The validity of self-ratings is generally low when using only the self-section of the instrument. This is because the LOS-self can be subject to bias and the results obtained from one