Management and Leadership Performance of Academic Middle Managers and the Attainment of their Trilogic Functions: An Input to an Enhancement Program

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Abstract - *Academic Middle Managers (AMMs) in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) are faculty members designated as College Deans, Programs Heads, Institute Directors and the like. They are responsible in translating institutional plans, programs and policies into doable activities to be able to achieve the vision, mission and goals of the academic organization. This study focused on determining the profile of the AMMs, the level of their management and leadership performance and their level of attainment of instruction, research and extension functions. Data were gathered using a questionnaire that were answered by faculty members and AMMs from selected SUCs of Region 1, Philippines.*

Results showed that the AMMs held master's degrees, ranked as Associate Professors, have served for ten years or less, with one to five years of administrative experience and have 16 to 20 teaching load units. The AMMs themselves assessed their level of management performance to be above expectations which was agreed upon by the faculty members except in decision making and planning and organizing. Further, the level of leadership performance of the AMMs was observed to be above expectations by both the AMMs and the faculty members. Also, the AMMs performed very satisfactorily in performing their instruction, research and extension functions, however, the faculty found them to have performed only satisfactorily in research. With this finding, an enhancement programs were prepared to enrich the performance of the AMMs in performing management roles of decision making and planning and organizing and in the performance of research function.

Keywords: *academic middle managers, management, leadership, trilogic functions*

INTRODUCTION

State Universities and Colleges are faced with a State Universities and Colleges are faced with a herculean task to produce human resources that can fit into local and global labor needs. To do this, they need to step up in the performance of their trifold functions of instruction, research and extension to provide relevant learning experiences to their students.

This is where designated academic middle managers step in, wielding their leadership and management knowledge and skills to attain results that satisfy expectations of higher education governing bodies and of local and international accreditation.

However, many academic middle managers were trained as specialists in their own fields, not as leaders and managers. Therefore, it would be interesting to look into how they perform as deans, programs heads, institute directors and the like, steering their respective colleges or programs in attaining their trifocal functions.

Floyd & Wooldridge [1] defined academic middle managers (AMMs) as people who perform a coordinating role where they mediate, negotiate and interpret connections between top management and the operational levels, and hence are the people who are directly involved in the planning and coordinating of the change implementation processes in organizations and departments [1].

Further, Caye [2] posited that middle managers feel pressure from their bosses to achieve ever-challenging objectives, and they feel pressure from their teams, which do not always understand the direction. They are squeezed in the middle. Too often, middle managers have responsibility but no authority.

Rudhumbu [3] cited that the role of AMMs has been a subject of contestation for a long time the world because there has not been a clear-cut articulation of

what exactly this role constitutes or means. Such a situation according to literature has tended to affect the way the AMMs enact their role in their different departments and organizations. Traditionally, the role of the AMMs has been viewed as transmitters of top management views to the lower echelons of the organization [3].

Over the years, Kallenberg [4] stated that the role and function of academic middle managers in Higher Education has been changing. Today, academic middle managers' influence does not originate in their hierarchical authority but rather in their unique knowledge base and in their ability to integrate strategic information with operating level information.

There is certainly a great deal of uncertainty, confusion and very often frustration at executive level regarding the effectiveness of the middle manager. Many executives are dissatisfied with their middle managers and are questioning the value of this position within the organization. Some executives are actually blaming middle managers for holding back the organization from achieving its full potential. This ambiguity about the role is not only confined at executive level as many middle managers themselves are unsure of the jobs key tasks and more importantly what is required from them within the role. One thing is certain, this ambiguity is causing a great deal of concern and cost within organizations. So, what do middle managers actually do and more importantly what are they meant to achieve within an organization (Dance, 2001) [5]?

The results of this study can serve as a yardstick for policy makers in state universities and colleges to create agenda to strengthen middle management. School administrators can be clarified on how academic middle managers perform their management and leadership roles as well as their attainment of their trilogic functions.

Academic middle managers themselves will also have a chance to reflect on their performance as leaders and managers of their respective colleges and/or programs to have a conscious effort to enrich their weak areas of performance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research aimed to design an enhancement program for academic middle managers (AMMs). Specifically, it determined the profile of the AMMs, and described the level of management and leadership performance of AMMs as well as their level of

attainment of their trilogic (instruction, research, extension) functions.

Further, this study looked into the factors influencing levels of management and leadership performance of the AMMs as well as the relationship between the level of attainment of trilogic functions and levels of management and leadership performance.

METHODS

This is a descriptive research which used a questionnaire as a data gathering tool. Voluntary response sampling was used to enlist the participation of faculty members and academic middle managers (AMMs) who were working in selected State Universities and Colleges in Region 1 Philippines.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The Leadership Performance Inventory by Kouzes and Posner [6] was adapted to measure the level of leadership performance of the academic middle managers (AMMs). It contained 30 behavioral statements - six for each of The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership which were Model the Way, inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act, and Encourage the Heart.

Moreover, the level of management performance of the AMMs was assessed using a questionnaire adapted from Appraisal 360 wherein the mandatory competencies measured were Communication, Decision Making, Developing Others, Developing Self, Integrity and Ethical Management, Planning and Organizing, Team Working and Relationship Building. The level of attainment of the trilogic functions of AMMs was measured using a researcher-designed questionnaire with established psychometric properties.

Ethical Considerations of the Study

This study was given an Ethical Clearance Certificate by the University Research Ethics Review Board of the Mariano Marcos State University after a thorough assessment of its research protocol and informed consent protocol. This was to guarantee that the rights and safety of participants in this study were respected and observed.

Data Analysis

The profile of the academic middle managers was described using frequencies and percentages. The level of leadership and management performance as well as the level of attainment of trilogic functions of the

AMMs was computed using the mean. The correlates of management and leadership performance were determined using the chi-square while the significant relationship between the levels of management and leadership performance and the level of attainment of trilogic functions was obtained using the Pearson r.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Academic Middle Managers. The AMMs were master's degree holders, ranked as Associate Professors, have been working in their respective State Universities and Colleges for ten years and below, have had 1 to 5 years of administrative experience and had teaching loads of 11 to 15 units.

Table 1. Level of Management Performance of the Academic Middle Managers

| | Respondents | | | |
| | AMMs | | Faculty | |
	M	DR	M	DR
Communication	4.07	AE	3.80	AE
Decision Making	4.08	AE	3.48	ME
Developing Others	4.17	AE	3.86	AE
Developing Self	4.21	AE	3.87	AE
Integrity & Ethical Management	4.20	AE	3.51	AE
Planning & Organizing	4.06	AE	3.33	ME
Team Working	4.21	AE	3.81	AE
Relationship Building	4.14	AE	3.85	AE
Overall Mean	**4.14**	**AE**	**3.69**	**AE**

Management Performance. Table 1 indicates that the level of management role performance of the academic middle managers was observed to be above expectations for both the AMMs and the faculty members. This indicates the AMMs were very good in carrying out the expected tasks ascribed to their designations as academic managers.

For the AMMs they observed themselves to have performed the most in both developing themselves and team working. Developing the self is a management role which involves the ability to focus on own development and to take action to learn. This is not taken in a selfish point of view rather on the deliberate and calculated actions of the AMMs to continually improve their knowledge and skills in their own specializations.

On the other hand, team working is a management role involving the ability to contribute to teams and to improve their effectiveness through personal commitment. The strategic position of the AMMs in the organization where they are located below other academic officials and above faculty members entails them to collaborate with them in almost all aspects of organizational functions.

However, the faculty members assessed the AMMs to have only met expectations in decision making and planning and organizing. Decision making is a management role which refers to the ability to evaluate or judge the best course of action and to make decisions at the appropriate speed. The inability to make right decisions at the right time can cause serious predicaments in the organization.

Further, planning and organizing management role refers to the ability to plan, organize and prioritize work, balancing resources, skills, priorities and timescales to achieve objectives. Rudhumbu posited [3] cited that academic middle managers as administrators have tasks and responsibilities which encompass the management of human resources within the subject departments, paired with the coordinating responsibilities, budget administration and instructional planning [7]. Not being able to lay out clear directions for an academic organization as well as allocate resources for the realization of organizational objectives can cause deleterious results on instruction, research and extension activities.

However, it is important to note that too often, middle managers have responsibility but no authority. They are lost in a matrix organization with unclear roles and responsibilities [2].

Table 2. Level of Leadership Performance of the Academic Middle Managers

| | Respondents | | | |
| | AMMs | | Faculty | |
	M	DR	M	DR
Model the Way	4.08	AE	3.80	AE
Inspire a Shared Vision	3.94	AE	3.50	AE
Challenge the Process	3.95	AE	3.52	AE
Enable Others to Act	4.29	AE	3.87	AE
Encourage the Heart	4.17	AE	3.84	AE
Overall Mean	**4.09**	**AE**	**3.84**	**AE**

Leadership Performance. Table 2 illustrates that the leadership performance of the AMMS was observed to be above expectations by both the AMMs and faculty members. This implies that they exceeded what was expected from them as leaders of their academic departments.

For the AMMs and faculty members, they assessed that the AMMs performed their best in enabling others to act. This refers to the ability to respect others and help them enhance their capabilities. This entails

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treating others with dignity, developing cooperative relationships, supporting decisions that other faculty members make on their own, giving people the freedom to do their work and ensuring that people grow in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.

This information supported Rogers' (2017) position that exemplary leaders know they don't do it alone and key to this practice is when they are able to create an environment in which colleagues do their best [7].

However, the faculty members observed that the AMMs met above expectations in inspiring a shared vision. It is a leadership role which refers to the ability of the academic middle manager to foresee trends and see how the organization could transform itself and position itself in consonance with these trends. This implies that AMMs need to put extra effort in looking for opportunities that would give them a competitive edge in instruction, research and extension and establish a sustainable and relevant niche in the years to come.

Table 3. Level of Attainment of Trilogic Functions of the Academic Middle Managers

| | Respondents | | | |
| | AMMs | | Faculty | |
	M	DR	M	DR
Instruction	4.04	VS	3.80	VS
Research	3.79	VS	3.48	S
Extension	3.91	VS	3.64	VS
Overall Mean	**3.91**	**VS**	**3.64**	**VS**

Attainment of Trilogic Functions. Table 3 describes that the level of attainment of the AMMS of their trilogic functions was very satisfactory as observed by the AMMs and the faculty members except for the level of attainment of research functions where the faculty members assessed to be satisfactory. The Group of Eight of Australia [8] underpinned the relevance of research when it stated that to make changes possible, universities need to perform research that creates new understanding, new technologies and the potential for action; and by providing a store of knowledge and capabilities that society as a whole has been able to draw upon.

Being managers and leaders of their own academic programs, AMMs bear the responsibility to oversee the planning and organizing of a sustainable research culture. In this study, it is clearly echoed by the faculty members that this needs to be done.

Correlates of Management and Leadership Performance. Table 4 showed that the levels of management performance in communication, developing others, and planning and organizing is influenced by the highest educational attainment of the AMMs. Further, the levels of management performance in communication, decision making, developing others and team working is influenced by the years in service of the AMMs.

Table 4. Correlates of Management Performance

| Management Performance | Profile of the Academic Middle Managers | | | | |
| | HEA | FR | YS | YAE | FL |
			(p-values)		
Communication	**.019***	.133	**.000****	.285	.131
Decision Making	.371	.213	**.005****	.081	.312
Developing Others	**.002****	.898	**.040***	.646	.673
Developing Self	.786	.664	.281	.945	.300
Integrity & Ethical Management	.203	.588	**.004****	.484	.761
Planning & Organizing	**.025***	.224	.926	.599	.576
Team Working	.362	.745	**.041***	.393	.329
Relationship Building	.055	.635	.053	.315	.497

***Significance at .01α * Significance at .05α*
Legend: HEA–Highest Educational Attainment, FR– Faculty Rank, YS-Years in Service, YAE-Years of Administrative Experience, FL-Faculty Load

Table 5. Correlates of Leadership Performance

| Leadership Performance | Profile of the Academic Middle Managers | | | | |
| | HEA | FR | YS | YAE | FL |
			(p-values)		
Model the Way	.395	.839	**.011***	.737	.960
Inspire a Shared Vision	**.035***	.087	.383	.408	.115
Challenge the Process	.207	.328	**.000****	.574	.556
Enable Others to Act	.076	.571	**.001****	.772	.177
Encourage the Heart	.053	.209	.070	.718	.672

***Significance at .01α   * Significance at .05α*
Legend: HEA–Highest Educational Attainment, FR– Faculty Rank, YS-Years in Service, YAE-Years of Administrative Experience, FL-Faculty Load

Table 5 Data also showed that the level of leadership performance in inspiring a shared vision is correlated with the highest educational attainment of the AMMs.

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Moreover, the level of leadership performance in modelling the way, challenging the process and enabling others to act are correlated with the years in service of the AMMs.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study showed that the academic middle managers still lack the necessary administrative experience that they need to sharpen their managerial and leadership skills as shown by the few years that they have been designated in such positions in the academe. This might affect their performance as Chase [9] had revealed that a large and medium effect was noted between tenure in the management and competency in financial management, leadership, human management, technical support and conceptual support.

Though they generally performed above expectations both in their management and leadership performances, the areas on decision making and planning and organizing as well as on inspiring a shared vision necessitates to be enhanced. As Pohankova [10] mentioned that the most striking part in management is decision-making and Scott [11] prescribed that for a business to successfully achieve its objectives, managers need to pay careful attention to performing each of the key management roles of planning, organizing, leading and controlling.

This study also found that the attainment of research functions deserves attention. An important point was raised by Hanover Research 2014 that a culture of research requires both institutional- and unit-based leaders to set clear research goals and communicate them effectively. The goals must be accompanied by a well-defined plan of research success evaluation, as well as adjusting job descriptions to include statements of research and teaching expectations.

Based from the above conclusions, it is hereby recommended that the academic middle managers pursue higher levels of education and be given more chances in leading and managing academic programs. To further look into lived experiences of academic middle managers, further studies are recommended to undertake qualitative researches to provide depth and better understand their performance of leadership and management roles.

Lastly, an enhancement program to enrich management and leadership performance of academic middle managers is highly recommended.

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