

Correlates of Role Enactment among the Academic Chairpersons of Selected Institutions in Bukidnon

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ABSTRACT

The chairpersons' role and approaches to conflict management, strategies in communication and techniques in program implementation are enacted by the department Chairpersons. The study aimed to investigate the correlates of role performance of the chairpersons as perceived by the role incumbent and role partners. The study used the descriptive design involving the incumbent deans, department chairpersons and faculty members of the HEIs. The study utilized the non-probability sampling design. The mean, standard deviation, ANOVA, and Pearson correlation were used. Results showed that the level of role conception of academic chairpersons within the same range as that of the role enactment as perceived by the deans and their role partners (faculty). The approaches to conflict management, strategies in communication and techniques in program implementation are correlates of administrative role, leadership role, interpersonal role, resource development role, role enactment of academic chairpersons. The study concludes that the chairpersons' level of role conception in their administrative roles, leadership roles, interpersonal roles and resource development roles is congruent with their perceived role enactment as assessed by the deans and faculty. The extent chairpersons used approaches to conflict management, strategies to communication and techniques in program implementation determines the adequacy of role enactment of academic chairpersons as they perform.

Keywords - Education, role performance, higher education, correlates, descriptive design, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

A set of activities or roles that are defined as potential behaviors to be performed in accordance with a specific job is associated with every work environment. Roles are created to serve the needs of institutions which lead to goal attainment. Productive institutions assume that a healthy working relationship depends largely among the workforces comprising it. The workforces, who have shared meaning on the mission and vision of the institution act as role partners having a common understanding of their respective roles. These roles in the hierarchical structure of every institution can be fully understood only if one relates it to other roles positioned above or below it.

There are three (3) basic assumptions in any role. First, is Role conception which is what a person thinks his/her job is and how the person has been taught to do it. The second is, Role expectation referring to what others in the organization think the person is responsible for, and how he/she carries out those responsibilities, this is usually based on the output of results expected from the role. The third assumption is Role enactment, the actual behavior in a role. It specifies what a person actually does in carrying out the job (Smith and Erwin, 2005).

The role occupant's understanding of a role affects the role behavior or performance; it may also affect the role partners' assessment of the role occupant's performance. The role occupants' conception and role partners' expectation have to be compared to role enactment or performance to estimate role conformity (Haas and Drabeck, 1973).

However, it is possible that one's conception may not necessarily jibe with role enactment, especially when the resources may be too limited or are not available (Bidle, 1986). Or, when role partners and role occupants tend to view role enactment based on their own perceptions. This means that a role occupant's view is quite different from the role partners'.

Adjusting to or meeting role expectations create problems. Role ambiguity is one such problem as there is a lack of clarity about just what the expectations are (House, Schuler, & Levanoni, 1983). Role ambiguity plagues employees endeavoring to successfully attain and maintain new responsibilities or goals. On the other hand, a person may not achieve role objectives due to overloading of responsibilities or under utilization of talents and abilities.

Equally important to this is that the role occupant and role partners have a good grasp of their respective roles. Conflicts could arise if role expectation does not match with role enactment. Role conflict may involve receiving contradictory messages about expected behavior and can in turn adversely affect performance (Jamal, 1984).

It is important for leaders to be able to minimize the degree to which role conflict and role ambiguity occurs in their groups. These problems have been found to have a negative impact on organizational commitment, job involvement, absenteeism, and satisfaction with co-workers and supervisors (Fisher & Gitelson, 1983).

This study looked into the complexities surrounding the role of an academic department chairperson in higher educational institutions. Today's academic department chairpersons are expected to understand and balance a plethora of roles. It is a truism that they are entrusted with enormous responsibility; they function as both faculty and administrators. The role conception sometimes causes confusion to their internal constituents (deans, fellow chairs and faculty) despite their expressed role in the College Manuals and University Codes.

It is significant to mention that conflicts likely occur between academic department chairpersons and internal constituents. In the performance of their roles there are exhilarating and frustrating things that they encounter. To some, the role conception on certain tasks attached to their expressed role often contradicts with the expectation of the deans and sometimes of the faculty. There are times when the performance of a certain role is confusing, considering that there is no proper demarcation or boundary for its enactment. The lack of understanding of role breadth causes misinterpretations like grave abuse; it becomes disruptive to the operation of a department. This affects relationships among department members as the power dynamic and authority figure are ever-changing, thereby distorting roles.

FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on role theory, a leadership theory that explores how situational factors affect leaders' behaviors. In role theory, a leader's behavior is said to depend on a leaders' perception of several critical aspects of the situation: rules and regulations governing the job; role expectations of subordinates, peers and superiors; the nature of the task; and feedback about subordinate's performance. (Merton, 1957; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1975). Role theory clarifies how these situational demands and constraints could cause role conflict and role

ambiguity. Leaders may experience role conflict when subordinates and superiors have conflicting expectations about a leader's behavior or when company policies contradict how superiors expect tasks to be performed. A leader's ability to successfully resolve such conflicts may well determine leadership effectiveness (Tsui, 1984).

Role Theory postulates that human behavior is guided by how the individual conceived the role he enacts in his life and the expectations of other individuals that correspond to the said role and how it is performed (Biddle, 1986). Bedeian (1972) emphasizes that the study of roles is one of the most complex areas in the study of human behavior. The role of an individual in a social group is the pattern of actions expected of a person in his activities involving others. The pattern of actions which constitutes a role is influenced by the individual's knowledge of the role, his motivation to perform the role, his attitudes toward himself and the other persons in the interpersonal behavior event. Since all individuals possess unique motivations, attitudes and interpersonal response traits, it follows that the individual performance of various roles is equally unique.

This research confines itself to the role of the department academic department chairpersons—a status position which, as portrayed in the literature, is basic and important in the administration of a college or university. This includes the relationship between the components or dimensions encompassing skills and behaviors necessary for effective academic department administration and role enactment of academic department chairpersons as perceived by the role partners and conceived by the role occupant.

Fundamentally, roles are organized behavioral patterns and expectations that attend a given position (hierarchical, functional, or social) or that accompany a specific situation. That is, roles encapsulate and invoke the accepted repertoire of individual conduct associated with a specific position or extant circumstance. In this way, roles provide behavioral guidelines, prescriptions, or boundaries in the form of expectations. Role expectation is a set of norms representing the kind of behaviors that should take place for a given social interaction. They may be viewed as actions or qualities expected of the occupant of a position. When viewed as actions, these norms are usually expressed in administrative handbooks, teachers' manuals, or in job description which clarify powers and responsibilities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study determined how the chairpersons' role, approaches to conflict management, strategies in communication and techniques in program

implementation are exercised by the academic department chairpersons in three higher education institutions in the Province of Bukidnon.

It inquired into role enactment of academic department chairpersons themselves as well as assessment of role performance by the academic department chairpersons' role partners- those who are on the super ordinate position (Deans) and those in the subordinate position (the departmental faculty).

Furthermore, the study aimed to investigate the approaches to conflict management, strategies in communication and techniques in program implementation, as correlates of role enactment of academic department chairpersons from the perspective of the role incumbent and of his/her role alters.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The descriptive research design was used in this study. It is a type of research concerned with the conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident, or trends that are developing. It primarily draws attention to the present although it often considers past events and influences as they relate to current conditions (Best and Kahn, 1998).

Research Environment

The study was conducted at Central Mindanao University (CMU), Bukidnon State College (BSC) and Mountain View College (MVC) in the Province of Bukidnon. CMU is a comprehensive institution and BSC is a teacher training institution though both are public non-sectarian institutions of higher learning principally supported by state funds. MVC is a sectarian institution run by the Seventh Day Adventists and a private institution of higher learning.

The Departments of Central Mindanao University are organized by the Deans of every College on the basis of fields of study or discipline, duly approved by the President of the University. It is headed by a chairman who is appointed by the President upon recommendation by the Dean concerned. Moreover, the Divisions of Bukidnon State College are organized by the Deans of every School on the basis of fields of study or discipline, duly approved by the President of the College. It is headed by a chairperson who is appointed by the President upon recommendation of the Dean concerned. Finally, the Departments of Mountain View College are organized by the Deans of every School on the basis of fields of study or discipline, duly approved by the President of the College. It is headed by

a chairperson who is nominated by the faculty and deans from different schools, to the administrative council who recommends for appointment to the President.

The organizational structure of CMU, BSC and MVC shows that the departments/divisions are directly under the Office of the College/School Deans which are directly under the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The Respondents

The respondents of the study were the incumbent deans, department chairpersons and faculty members of Central Mindanao University, Bukidnon State College and Mountain View College. The organizational structure of these schools is that, the dean is the head of a college or school. Under the deans are the chairpersons of each division or department. Each chairperson of the division handles the faculty in the division. In other words, the faculty transacts business with the chairpersons, their direct superior. In cases where matters cannot be resolved at the chairperson's level these are elevated to the dean.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by school

| School | Number of Respondents | | | n | Total |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|---------|-----|-------|
| | Dean | Chairperson | Faculty | | |
| | N | N | N | | |
| Mountain View College | 5 | 15 | 56 | 33 | 53 |
| Central Mindanao University | 7 | 33 | 140 | 82 | 122 |
| Bukidnon State College | 5 | 13 | 90 | 52 | 70 |
| Total | 17 | 61 | 286 | 167 | 245 |

Sampling Procedure

The study utilized the non probability sampling design using complete enumeration techniques for the deans and the department chairpersons because there are only few deans and chairpersons in every college. Some deans and chairpersons were also involved in the tryout of the questionnaire; hence, they were not included as actual respondents of the study.

For the faculty respondents the probability sampling using systematic random sampling technique was used. In identifying the sample faculty respondents,

Slovin's formula was employed. Thus, a total sample of 167 was taken from the population of 286 faculties. These 167 were proportionately distributed among the three schools, getting 58 percent from each.

Research Instrument

The main instruments used were the Expectations/Conceptions and Performance Questionnaire designed to elicit from deans and faculty members the performance and their expectations for the role of the department chairperson, and the conceptions of the chairperson incumbents for their role as such.

Four (4) sets of research questionnaires were used in gathering the data. The first part elicited data on the department chairperson's approaches to conflict management measured in terms of avoiding, dominating, obliging, integrating and compromising. The second part delved into the strategies in communication of chairpersons which were categorized into defensive communication strategy and supportive communication strategy. The third part dealt on the department chairperson's techniques in program implementation in terms of monitoring and scanning technique and instructional techniques. The fourth part dealt on the department chairperson's roles in the context of administrative role, leadership role, interpersonal role and resource development role. The third and fourth instruments were validated by deans, chairpersons and faculty of the subject higher education institutions and were not included as respondents of the study. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach Alpha and obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.9429.

Data Gathering

The researcher asked permission to conduct the study from the Presidents of Central Mindanao University (CMU), Bukidnon State College (BSC) and Mountain View College (MVC) through their respective Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs.

The survey questionnaires were personally delivered to the campuses of CMU, BSC and MVC and administered to the deans, department chairpersons and faculty. The intent and nature of the questionnaires were explained fully to the respondents.

Statistical Techniques

To facilitate data analysis, the following statistical techniques were used:

1. Mean and Standard Deviation. These were used in the descriptive part of the analysis.
2. F test. This was used to test the difference in the rating of respondents by group.
3. Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation. This was used to trace the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2. Comparison of the role enactment of academic chairpersons and role performance as perceived by the role partners in administrative role

| | Role enactment | | Role performance | | | | F-ratio |
|----------------------|----------------|----|------------------|-------------|-----------|----|---------|
| | Role Occupant | QD | Super-ordinate | Subordinate | Average | QD | |
| Administrative Roles | \bar{X} | | \bar{X} | \bar{X} | \bar{X} | | |
| Fiscal Overseer | 3.82 | H | 3.11 | 3.87 | 3.49 | A | 4.87** |
| Schedule Coordinator | 4.24 | H | 3.64 | 4.25 | 3.95 | H | 3.96* |
| Report Generator | 3.98 | H | 3.50 | 4.09 | 3.80 | H | 3.58* |
| Staff Supervisor | 4.20 | H | 3.82 | 3.24 | 3.97 | H | 2.34 |
| Overall | 4.06 | H | 3.52 | 4.11 | 3.82 | H | 3.85* |

Leadership Role. Table 2 presents the F-ratios and the weighted means on the role enactment of the role occupant (chairpersons) and the role performance evaluation by its role partners (deans and faculty) on the chairperson's leadership roles.

Curriculum Leader. The table shows that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents in relation to the leadership role of chairpersons as curriculum leader. The level of perception among respondents on the role performance of the specific tasks under the abovementioned roles are similar. This indicates that the weighted mean of 4.18 based on the perception of the chairperson is not far from the assessment of the deans which is 3.88 and 3.85

for the faculty with an average mean of 3.87.

External Liaison. Moreover, the weighted mean of 3.91 based on the rating of the chairpersons to their conception and role enactment of their role as external liaison is very close to the 3.48 weighted mean of the dean’s role performance as well to the faculty’s weighted mean of 3.65. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of respondents in relation to the above-mentioned role.

Internal Advocate. The table discloses further that there is a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents on the Leadership roles of chairpersons as internal advocate based on an F-ratio of 5.91 in the analysis of variance. The mean from responses of chairpersons’ leadership task as internal advocate is done on a very high level (4.62), their role partners yielded only a high level (4.23). Hence, there is close conformity in the perception between deans and faculty on the chairpersons’ leadership task as internal advocate.

On the other hand, a disparity of perceptions between the role occupant and the role partners is evident as shown by the overall weighted mean ranging from 3.94 to 4.35. This is corroborated by the F-ratio of 5.60 in the analysis of variance.

Table 3. Comparison of the level of role enactment and role performance of academic chairpersons leadership roles

| Leadership Roles | Role enactment | | Role performance | | | | F-ratio |
|-------------------|----------------|----|------------------|-------------|-----------|----|---------|
| | Role Occupant | QD | Super-ordinate | Subordinate | Average | QD | |
| | \bar{X} | | \bar{X} | \bar{X} | \bar{X} | | |
| Curriculum Leader | 4.18 | H | 3.88 | 3.85 | 3.87 | H | 2.42 |
| External Liaison | 3.91 | H | 3.48 | 3.65 | 3.57 | H | 1.51 |
| Internal Advocate | 4.62 | H | 4.21 | 4.24 | 4.23 | H | 5.91** |
| Role Model | 4.68 | H | 4.18 | 4.19 | 4.19 | H | 9.11** |
| Overall | 4.35 | H | 3.94 | 3.93 | 3.94 | H | 5.60** |

Role Model. There is a significant difference in the perceptions of respondents on the chairpersons’ leadership task as role model. The mean from responses of

chairpersons' leadership task as role model is done on a very high level (4.68), their role partners yielded only high level (4.19). Hence, there is close conformity in the perception between deans and faculty on the chairpersons' leadership task as role model.

Generally, there is uniformity on the role enactment and role performance evaluation of role partners in relation to the chairpersons' leadership role. Nevertheless, the data reveals that there is a significant difference in role performance and role enactment as shown by the F-ratio of 5.60 in the analysis of variance. Hence the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4. Comparison on the level of role enactment and role performance of academic chairpersons interpersonal roles

| Interpersonal Roles | Role enactment | | Role performance | | | | F-ratio |
|---------------------|----------------|----|------------------|-------------|-----------|----|---------|
| | Role Occupant | QD | Super-ordinate | Subordinate | Average | QD | |
| | \bar{X} | | \bar{X} | \bar{X} | \bar{X} | | |
| Counselor | 4.44 | H | 3.96 | 4.02 | 4.00 | H | 4.83** |
| Coach | 4.48 | H | 4.14 | 3.98 | 4.06 | H | 7.07** |
| Mediator | 4.21 | H | 4.14 | 3.93 | 4.04 | H | 2.02 |
| Climate Regulator | 4.40 | H | 4.27 | 3.97 | 4.12 | H | 4.97** |
| Overall | 4.39 | H | 4.13 | 3.97 | 4.05 | H | 5.27** |

Interpersonal Role. The data reflects that the academic chairperson's interpersonal roles are based on developing productive relationships among individuals in the workplace. A closer look at the mean ratings by the chairpersons on interpersonal roles indicates that their ratings conform to that of the deans and faculty. The chairperson's over all weighted mean is 4.39 while the average mean of 4.05 for the role partners is evident on the data. It is further disclosed that a significant difference of 5.27 exist between the level of conception by the role occupant and the level of its role enactment as perceived by the role partners. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected along this line.

The data further reveals that there is significant difference in the conception of chairpersons and role performances of the deans and faculty along the dimensions of responsibility attached to the interpersonal role of a chairperson. In the analysis

of variance, the F-ratio of 4.83 on the task as counselor, the F-ratio of 7.07 on the task as coach and the F-ratio of 4.97 on the task as climate regulator validated the significant difference.

Counselor. The respondents shared the same view in relation to this particular task. As revealed by some chairpersons, the tasks of listening and giving of advices to problems and concerns of faculty and between faculty and students in the department/division are invigorating. Hence, a high level of role enactment is portrayed in the data. This finding is supported by the study of Creswell, (1990) wherein part of a chairperson's task is counseling.

Coach. The responsibility to prepare faculty to achieve excellence, inspiring them to pursue further studies and train them to become successful researchers, was rated by the chairpersons as highly observed by them. Both deans and faculty shared the same view to validate the claim of the chairperson. The rating of the chairpersons disclosed a weighted mean of 4.48, verbally interpreted as high. The same is closer to the mean average rating of 4.06 by the role partners, verbally interpreted as high.

Mediator. The task of a mediator in the interpersonal role dimension of responsibility showed no significant difference as indicated in the data. This is disclosed by the respective weighted means based on the ratings of the chairpersons, deans and faculty. The chairpersons weighted mean is 4.21, while the dean's is 4.14 and the faculty is 3.97. With an average mean of 4.04 and an F-ratio of 2.02 in the analysis of variance, this therefore, indicates that a high score is assigned by respondents along this area.

Resource Development Role. Table 4 discloses the F-ratio of 0.41 in the analysis of variance which indicates, that there is no significant difference in the role enactment of academic chairpersons and role partners' evaluation on the chairpersons' role enactment of their resource development role. The task as faculty evaluator revealed significant difference with the F-ratio of 3.30 in the analysis of variance. All other responsibilities like faculty recruiter, faculty mentor and resource warrior bears no significant difference.

Hence, there is a great degree of conformity between the role occupant and role partners on the role enactment of resource development role as indicated by the respective weighted mean of the respondents found in the table 4. No influence of mean ratings is evident between the respondents. The picture of role performance indicates less possibility of the existence of role ambiguity for the role performance of this role. By the very nature of resource development role being an ordinary task a regular one, there is not much room of interpretations

by either role occupants or by role partners.

Table 5. Comparison of the level of role enactment and role performance of academic chairpersons resource development roles

| Resource Development Roles | Role enactment | | Role performance | | | | F-ratio |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|----|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|----|---------|
| | Role Occupant \bar{X} | VI | Super-Ordinate \bar{X} | Subordinate \bar{X} | Aver \bar{X} | VI | |
| Faculty Recruiter | 4.01 | H | 4.30 | 4.05 | 4.05 | H | 0.65 |
| Faculty Mentor | 4.10 | H | 4.00 | 4.02 | 4.02 | H | 0.19 |
| Faculty Evaluator | 4.36 | H | 3.89 | 4.10 | 4.10 | H | 3.30* |
| Resource Warrior | 3.81 | H | 3.88 | 3.75 | 3.75 | H | 0.18 |
| Overall | 4.09 | H | 4.02 | 3.98 | 3.98 | H | 0.41 |

As indicated by the overall weighted mean of 4.09 based on the chairpersons rating, a weighted mean of 4.02 based on the deans rating and a weighted mean of 3.98 based on the faculty's rating, there is not enough significant difference as further elucidated by the F-ratio of 0.41 in the analysis of variance.

Techniques in Program Implementation. The table 6 shows that there is a moderate, direct and significant relationship between techniques in program implementation to the administrative roles, leadership roles, interpersonal roles and resource development roles and role performance of chairpersons. A total correlation value of 0.516** reflects that techniques in program implementation are significantly related to the chairpersons' role. The percentage of its contribution to the chairpersons' role performance is high at 26.62 compared to the other independent variables.

Table 6. Correlates of role enactment of academic chairpersons

| Independent Variables | Role performance Variables (Dependent Variables) | | | | | Total | % of Contribution |
|--------------------------------------|--|------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------|---------|-------------------|
| | Administrative Roles | Leadership Roles | Interpersonal Roles | Resource Development Roles | | | |
| Approaches to Conflict Management | | | | | | 0.319** | 10.17 % |
| Avoiding | 0.322** | 0.148** | 0.301** | 0.158** | | | |
| Dominating | 0.020 | 0.176** | 0.060 | 0.007 | | | |
| Obliging | 0.310** | 0.213** | 0.364** | 0.264** | | | |
| Collaborative | 0.228** | 0.231** | 0.331** | 0.357** | | | |
| Compromising | 0.214** | 0.195 | 0.291** | 0.357** | | | |
| Strategies to Communication | | | | | | 0.433* | 18.74 % |
| Supportive Communication | 0.529** | 0.600** | 0.705** | 0.619** | | | |
| Defensive Communication | 0.036 | 0.039 | 0.008 | 0.091 | | | |
| Techniques in Program Implementation | | | | | | 0.516** | 26.62 % |
| Instructional Strategy | 0.396** | 0.211** | 0.460** | 0.456** | 0.496** | | |
| Monitoring and Scanning | 0.402** | 0.199** | 0.415** | 0.442** | 0.475** | | |

The correlation is expected because, monitoring and scanning and instructional strategies measured role performance. Monitoring and scanning take on the established system and interrelated activities to ensure quality in the various phases of academic programs. This presupposes that the chairperson's efforts to assure that the human resources in the academic unit are moving toward the right direction in the academic community.

On instructional strategies, the chairpersons are expected to initiate activities toward improved instructional practices and encourage teaching innovations and creative strategies in the teaching learning process.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, this study concludes that:

1. The chairpersons' level of role conception in their administrative roles, leadership roles, interpersonal roles and resource development roles is congruent with their perceived role enactment as assessed by the deans and faculty. This means that the level of role conformity is high despite the absence of some of the specified roles in the codes and manuals of the respective academic institutions. Therefore, not everything which the chairpersons perform as a faculty and as administrator is written as rules. Considering the plethora of chairpersons' role, it is clear that many things were not spelled out in writing. This results in role ambiguity.
2. The significant difference in the level of conception and enactment of roles is attributable to the performance of functions by the chairpersons which are ancillary to their expressed roles. This includes some customary practices adopted in the department which causes several interpretations that lead to role conflict.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered for consideration:

A. For the President. Formal leadership training opportunities should be directed toward chairs (e.g., President's Leadership Program). Feedback of intensive programs (e.g., 360-degree assessment) and those that allow chairs to share common methods for solving problems should be particularly helpful. Chair roles are complex and no single individual can be skilled at all of the roles.

B. For the Deans. It is suggested that the deans review, approve and implement the intervention designed herein as proposed. Developing a sustainable and feasible Management Development Program to strengthen the capabilities of the department chairperson as first level manager in the College or School.

C. For the Chairpersons. Findings would help clarify the role of department chairperson to the faculty and to the school administration as a whole which can advantageously be used as a medium for further development in terms of developing a chairpersons manual to improve, enhance and change institutional climate.

D. For the Faculty. Faculty are usually appointed to the position of department chairperson without receiving any training or instruction, with little indication of what it is they are supposed to do, and still less of knowing when or how well they are doing it.

E. For future Researchers. Other studies should be conducted on role enactment, role conflict and role ambiguity.

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