"Leadership and transformation in a South African university"

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Abstract

Politicized South African higher education institutions (HEIs) have influenced leaders to be indecisive, error free, fearful of taking risks, marginalizing resisters, emotional and failing to recognize their personal weaknesses while working well with leaders beyond the university. This study interrogates leaders' capabilities that have the potential to drive transformation at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) in the post-merger and incorporation era. The researcher undertook this study to highlight the prevalence of leadership incapability in the post-merger and incorporation era at DUT which has mainly been caused by leaders failing to take transformative decisions. This study employed a quantitative approach guided by a structured survey questionnaire to a target population of 191 with a response rate of 70%. The questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS generating the reliability coefficient alpha of 0.947 indicating a high degree of acceptance and consistency of the results.

The study findings revealed the highest percentage of the research participants who held opposite views regarding the statement that leaders learn from their mistakes (32%) and that they understand their personal weaknesses (27%), with the highest percentage being undecided (46%). Another major highlight of the study was the highest percentage of the respondents who had a view that leaders work well with other leaders beyond the university (55%) as compared to internal stakeholders (49%). Researchers mention leadership capabilities as only being applicable to higher education institutions in general. This study provides information on leaders' incapability, post-merger and incorporation, which could be of benefit to the university change management specialists in the design of relevant and specific interventions of change with the aim of filling the gaps or preventing bottlenecks identified by the findings. This study will contribute to the body of knowledge in developing countries as there is a dearth of published studies investigating leadership capabilities mishaps in the post-merger and incorporation era at the Universities of Technology.

Keywords: capability, change management, higher education institutions, Durban University of Technology, transformation agenda.
JEL Classification: M1.

Introduction

The diverse, highly politicized and regulated higher education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa require leaders who possess very strong personal, interpersonal and intellectual capabilities which tend to be uncommon in reality. Various researchers (Jansen, 2004; Kotecha, 2003; Seale, 2004) indicate that ineffective and inefficient leadership has been identified as one of the major weaknesses of South African Higher Education, which has impeded the transformation agenda. The reason for this lack of leadership capabilities might be because leadership development has been given little attention by most of the institutions of higher learning. Fullan & Scott (2009, p. 116) indicate that all key challenges of academic leadership have a human dimension; it is important to have a high level of interpersonal capability in order to better understand what is happening and decide what might work best to resolve the situation. While Hempsall (2014, p. 386) places an emphasis on the need for relationship-building skills. Herbst & Conradie (2011, p. 2) argue that it is clear that the context of leadership is changing and that leadership with the capability to build relationships, to collaborate and to lead change effectively will be critical to long-term success across domains of expertise and different organizational contexts.

Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou and Maznevski (2008) note the key differences between "global leaders" and "leaders" that global leaders face more uncertainty and greater contextual changes. The current authors proclaim that all leaders need to be open to re-learning, and develop the capacity to handle paradox, perplexity, ambiguity and uncertainty. Martin (2005) concurs that critical skills for effective leadership in future fall in the category of relationships and collaborations. This study is triggered by perspectives advanced by the research above, with capabilities possessed by leaders in this university and their effect on transformation post-merger and incorporation are being examined.

Van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry & Van Meurs (2009) state that leadership is a shared influence process that 'arises from the interactions of diverse individuals'. There is a plethora of researchers who have cited capacity and talent, working productively, calmly and being able to make difficult decisions (Fullan & Scott, 2009; Mabelebele, 2013; Service & Carson, 2013, p. 48) as some major capabilities required in higher education institutions. According to Hempsall (2014, p. 386), there is a strong sense that traditional leadership skills are no longer as effective as they used to be and that leaders need to develop additional skills to be able to meet the challenges they face. Herbst & Conradie (2011, p. 2) contend that given the view of leadership as a process

whereby individuals work together in order to foster change and transformation, new emphasis is now being placed on skills that are tied to relationships and interconnectedness (Martin, 2005). Therefore, to build the leadership capacity necessary for top-quality institutions of higher learning, managers will need to possess good management and technical skills, as well as well-developed social and emotional skills. Mendenhall et al. (2008, p. 30) mention emotional stability, decision-maker and negotiator roles, and the ability to learn coupled with competencies that varied depending on the cultural context including business relationships, the role of action, and the style of authority. Fullan & Scott (2009) and Ramsden (1998, p. 84) cite personal capability of a leader to admit to and learn from errors and take calculated risks. While, Makgoba & Chetty (2010, p. 168) mention decisive and effective leadership as the ingredient for change in higher education institutions. The reality is different from the rhetoric, however, because restructuring and reform would potentially affect the vested interests of all sectional interests which include highly politicized unions of students, teachers and administrative personnel, and the political leadership (Olsen, 2000, p. 22). This study is informed by perspectives advanced by different researchers above, though it investigates all leader's capabilities post-merger and incorporation of the Durban University of Technology in South Africa. There is a small amount of published material on 'mergers' and transformation in higher education institutions (HEIs), but very little research has been devoted to the capabilities that could drive transformation post-mergers and incorporations.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate leadership capabilities that could drive transformation post-merger and incorporation at DUT.

The next section incorporates the reviewed literature in relation into the study, research design, results presentations and analyses as well as conclusions and recommendations.

1. Conceptual framework

The term "leadership" has many definitions but for the purpose of this study the term encompasses and refers to university managers to lead, drive and influence transformation. Olasupo (2011, p. 163) contend that leadership is a process for social influence that a leader seeks the voluntary participation of subordinates in an effort to reach the institutional goals. Kouzes and Posner (2002) view leadership as a process used to bring forth the best from themselves and others. While Kotter (1996) considers leadership as a means to inspire people to realize institutional vision. Lussier (1997) advances it as influencing employees to achieve organizational

objectives. Scott, Coates and Anderson (2008, p. 3) however maintain leadership as seen as having more focus on setting and motivating new directions. Despain and Converse (2003, p. 148) contend that leadership is about others and not about self.

This study recognizes the rich interpretations and understandings of the term leadership and invokes as relevant, the vast discourse as understood by numerous authorities. On the account of this premise, it intends to establish leadership capabilities that influence the era of transformation post-merger and incorporation at DUT. As the relationship between leadership capabilities and transformation is scantly discussed, this study, in recognition of this deficit, attempts to link the influence of leadership to transformation.

The term "transformation" can assume multiple meanings and definitions dependent on the context from which it emerges (Seedat, Khoza-Shangase & Sullivan, 2014, p. 69). Researchers in South Africa have defined transformation in terms of race (Francis & Hemson, 2010); efficiency (Ntshoe, 2004; Seedat et al., 2014, p. 70); change (Meyer & Botha, 2004; Ngara, 2003) and change of organizational strategy and structure, systems and processes, measurements and controls, culture and expectations, costs and capabilities (Oloyede, 2007). Ncayiyane and Hayward (2007, p. 23) indicate that transformation includes institutional funding, student financing, curricular reform, student access and success, academic research, institutional culture, as well as equity and gender issues. Transformation is one word that captures the social, economic and political imperatives and aspirations that followed the collapse of apartheid and the onset of democracy in South Africa (Wangenge-Ouma, 2010, p. 481). For the purpose of this study, transformation is not seen as a total metamorphosis, however, it is seen as totally linked to leadership capabilities that have a direct influence in shaping institutional transformation.

2. Literature review

2.1. Decisive and calm leadership: a higher education experience. South African HEIs are deemed to be led by individuals who lack leadership capabilities, which directly hamper transformation initiatives or programs within such institutions. Bateman and Snell (2002) posit that the magnitude of transformation of mergers and incorporations for HEIs in South Africa has mostly resulted in confusion, frustration, lack of employee loyalty, clashes in corporate culture, and low levels of morale and motivation for the people involved. Higher education in South Africa, like many countries in Europe and elsewhere, is facing major transformation challenges that require extraordinary leadership (Van Ameijde et

al., 2009). Fullan & Scott (2009, p. 113) indicate that capability is more closely associated with higher education leadership than management. They argue that it entails attributes such as being able to work productively, calmly, persuasively, and deftly with diversity and uncertainty. Van Niekerk (2005, p. 48) mentions passive-avoidant or laissez-faire leadership which tends to react only after problems have become serious enough to take corrective action, and decision making is often avoided entirely. Mabelebele (2013, p. 6) mentions that there is a range of personal attributes required for one to succeed in a leadership and management role of a HEI including courage; good sense of judgment and definiteness of decision. The successful leader is the one who can interpret the difficult and complex, and present it in a simplified and understandable way to followers (Service, 2009b). This study is informed by the perspectives presented by researchers above and extends their arguments by interrogating the capability of the university leaders post-merger and incorporation, including their willingness to make difficult decisions and whether they remain calm under pressure.

Fullan & Scott (2009, p. 110) indicate that leaders need people who are able to cope with the challenges of inevitable change and the unexpected. The researchers further argue that leadership should be able to manage their own emotional reactions to the uncertainty and discomfort and need to have an understanding of one's personal strengths and limitations. According to Herbst & Conradie (2011, p. 3), understanding one's strengths and weaknesses is regarded as essential for conscious personal transformation and development. Jokinen (2004) alludes that leaders cannot change what they are not consciously aware of. Hence, Scott et al. (2012, p. 82) mention admitting to and learning from one's errors and understanding personal strengths and limitations as two facets of leadership capabilities. Makgoba & Chetty (2010, p. 168) provide an example, that the merger process (between University of Natal and Durban Westville University) demonstrated that decisive and effective leadership is an essential ingredient for meaningful transformation and the creation of any great organization. Souba (2006) claims that for leaders to be able to transform their organizations to become more effective, they first need to understand themselves. According to Ramsden (1998, p. 84), university leaders are good at networking (plugged in), are skilled at (micro) political activity and at strategic alignment (risk-taking, forward-looking, entrepreneurial). Leaders who model a willingness to face and learn from their errors, who are interested in identifying where they can improve, and who strategically use networks with people in similar roles elsewhere to identify solutions

to their personal improvement priorities simultaneously help build a dimension of a change-capable university culture (Fullan & Scott, 2009, p. 101). Service and Carson (2013, pp. 47-48) aver that leaders all can gain wisdom, by properly reflecting on their mistakes and triumphs and not treating those two imposters the same. These commentators argue that effective leaders and followers realize that influence is relationship based on mutual learning and trust; give and take; win and lose. This study is informed by the views of the above researchers, though it adds to their discussions by investigating whether leaders post-merger and incorporation learn from their mistakes and whether they are confident to take calculated risks. This study uniquely investigates whether university leaders understand their personal strengths and weaknesses post-merger and incorporation at DUT.

2.2. A leadership approach to change resisters. The culture of fear tends to be cultivated by university leaders in response to those employees who are considered to be resistors, which have discouraged freedom of expression. Fullan & Scott (2009, p. 100) argue that listening does not mean listening only to people who agree with you. The researchers further aver that it is important to listen to resistors as they can identify the road blocks that need to be addressed and often have positive ideas. Cohen (2010, p. 15) suggests that one reason for listening to everyone as you define mission statement is to gain commitment. The commentator further allude that other leaders have good ideas, and may know something that you do not. By hearing all, you not only gain commitment, you may avoid missing both opportunities and threats to your mission statement. As Drucker noted, when making decisions about your business, dissent is a very good thing. Van Schoor (n.d., p. 1) suggests that to overcome resistance, a systemic approach, which includes a bottom-up, social and political influence stream, should be used. People resist change because they experience a loss of identity, of belonging, of meaning (Strickland, 2000) and of mastery (Moran & Brightman, 2001). Butcher & Atkinson (2001) mention that resistance to change is frequently due to a lack of information that can either be deliberate, that is, a strategy used by those in power to keep the powerless in an inferior position, or unintentional. Fullan & Scott (2009, p. 117) mention how interpersonal capabilities feature to influence people's behavior and decisions in effective ways. They further indicate that working with very senior people within and beyond the university without being intimidated, working constructively with people who are resistors and developing and using networks of colleagues to solve key workplace problems as some of the features. Deem (2001) and Middlehurst & Garrett (2002) found somewhat more promising rates in the UK – indicating

that a third of the academic leaders in their surveys reported receiving some formal training, but few reported receiving adequate feedback on their role. While this study is aligned to the above arguments by different researchers, it extends the debates by exploring whether university leaders work constructively with employees who are considered as resistors. This study further extends the body of knowledge by determining whether university leaders give constructive feedback to their subordinates.

2.3. Stakeholder relation in higher education institutions. Post-mergers and incorporations of the higher education institutions in South Africa, leaders and internal stakeholders including SRC and trade unions have been considered to be at logger heads with each other emanating from the unfulfilled transformation orientated expectations. Stubbs (2009, p. 17) clearly discusses the role that should be played by student organizations and SRCs within and across South African universities to bring about real transformation in the higher education sector that was fragmented based on race. Olsen (2000) is of the view that the role of higher education reflects the constellation of interests voiced by different organized interest groups in the sector, such as student unions, staff unions, professional associations, industry and business, and regional authorities. The merged and incorporated higher education institutions must also ensure the establishment of a new SRC and student representation to institutional structures and committees (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. 51). The findings of the study investigating leadership development thinking within the HE sector in the USA and UK broadly support the notion that for leaders to operate effectively they not only need to have a very clear sense of where they are going and what they hope to achieve, they must also be able to engage all stakeholders in this vision (Hempsall, 2014, p. 391). As Gergen (2009) notes, developing leaders is a need shared throughout the world. Noted leadership scholars Neck and Manz (2013) posit that all who desire to improve leadership effectiveness must commit to a lifelong journey of purposeful learning. To address global leadership realities, contextually adaptive people who can lead must be developed (Service and Loudon, 2012). The literature reviewed above deliberates on the role of two stakeholders while this study probes whether the university leaders work productively with the university stakeholders, including the trade unions and SRC, as well as with other leaders beyond the university including government, politicians, business and civil society.

3. Research methodology

A quantitative approach (Cresswell, 2009) was employed along with both a structured questionnaire that reached a large number of employees in leadership positions (junior to middle) which made possible for the quantification of the findings. Quantitative designs deal with a large number of respondents, use numbers to generalizable comparisons and conclusions about populations (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005) as the case in this study. The empirical study was conducted by means of a survey questionnaire which provided for the collection of large amounts of data. This study focussed on the stratified random sampling which is a modification of random sampling in which a research divides the population into two or more relevant and significant strata based on one or number of attributes (Lewis, Kaufman & Christakis, 2008, pp. 215-223). According to Brynard and Hanekom (2006), questionnaires provide respondents with an opportunity to carefully consider their responses to the various questions in the questionnaire.

The study employed a stratified random sampling of 191 respondents, ideal to test for the finding's reliability and validity, distributed equitably between academic and non-academic leaders with university leadership between Peromnes Grades 8 and 6 (junior and middle management). A host of researchers (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2005; and De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport, 2005) argue that a sample can only be described as representative if it has the same properties or characteristics as the population relevant to the research in question. This application of the stratified random sampling method is consistent with the assertions of De Vos et al. (2005). This type of sampling is known to ensure that the different segments of a population are given sufficient representation in the sample. The sample size is selected in proportion to the number of persons in the stratum; in other words, larger samples from larger strata and smaller samples from smaller strata (De Vos et al., 2005). A structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale was developed with a range from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, and (3) undecided, to (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree, allowing for the perspectives and views of the sampled university leaders to be captured through responses to leading statements.

4. Measuring instruments

As all participants were competent, they were capable of completing the questionnaires unassisted. The statements that were included in the questionnaire used in this study were formulated in accordance with the guidelines by Fullan and Scott (2009), Hempsall (2014), Mabelebele (2013), Makgoba and Chetty (2010), Mendenhall et al. (2008) and Service and Carson (2013).

5. Data collection

The data were collected over a three-month period from May to July 2013. Of the total of 191

questionnaires distributed, 133 responses were received representing a 70 percent response rate. To maintain confidentiality, the questionnaires were distributed and collected by the researcher. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha values for individual dimensions were high and a reliability coefficient of 0.947 was recorded.

6. Data analysis

The quantitative data collected from the respondents were analyzed using SPSS, version 12 for data capturing, presentation, analysis and interpretation.

7. Researcher's role and recording of data

Permission to conduct the study was requested from and granted by the DUT Ethics Committee. Consent was formally obtained from the participants and confidentiality anonymity were maintained at all times. A pilot study was undertaken prior to conducting a full-scale study.

8. Research findings

The sample represents the various work experience levels with 27% indicated having between 11-15 years of work service, 26% had between 0-5 years of experience, 20% had 21 years and more, 14% had between 6-10 years and 14% had between 16-20 years of experience. Most of the participants were academic staff members (51%), administrative staff (28%), academic support staff (8%), technical services staff (8%) and other (5%). The study findings revealed lack of leadership capabilities which contributed to the university's failure to achieve the transformation agenda. This means that the university leaders have limited capabilities aimed at transforming DUT and this necessitates the university to initiate and implement responsive change management interventions through management, leadership and executive development programs. A frequency analysis and cross-tabulations were conducted which are presented below.

Table 1. Leadership capabilities in higher education institution

Leadership capabilities	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Learn from their mistakes	17	17	30	33	5
Understand their personal strengths	7	17	38	34	3
Understand their personal weaknesses	5	22	46	23	5
Are confident to take calculated risks	5	20	32	34	10
Remain calm under heavy pressure	11	21	32	28	9
Are willing to take hard decisions	8	19	30	35	9
Are working productively with the university stakeholders (unions)	9	17	29	38	7
Are working productively with the university stakeholders (SRC)	6	14	32	44	5
Work with other leaders beyond the university (government, politicians and business)	5	3	38	46	9
Give constructive feedback to the subordinates	5	17	31	41	8
Work constructively with people who are considered as resistors	9	16	37	31	8

Table 1 shows that 38% of the respondents indicated that the university leaders learn from their mistakes. About a third (33%) of the research participants had opposite views.

Table 2. Cross-tabulation between 'leaders learn from their mistakes' and job categories

Job categories			
	Academic	Academic support	Administration
Disagree	35%	18%	27%
Undecided	28%	27%	35%
Agree	37%	38%	56%

Table 2 shows an almost equal percentage of the academic staff members who believed that leaders learn from their mistakes (37% vs 35% with opposite views). There was consensus (56%) amongst the administrative staff that leaders learn from their mistakes. Only 27% of the administration leaders had different views which were the lowest proportion as compared to other job categories. Table 1 shows that 37% of the respondents confirmed that the university leaders

understand their personal strengths. Only 24% of the research participants had opposite views regarding this statement. At the same time the percentage of those who were undecided was much higher, at 38% than those who shared negative opinion regarding leaders' understanding of their personal strengths. This finding also had the lowest levels of agreement and disagreement as compared to other variables of the study. The respondents who were in agreement and disagreement that

leaders understand their personal weaknesses had an almost equal percentage of 28%. Furthermore, this statement that university leader's understand

their personal weaknesses had the joint-highest proportion of respondents who were undecided (46%) as compared to all other variables of the study.

Table 3. Cross tabulation between 'leaders understand their personal weaknesses' and job categories

Job categories		
	Academic	Academic support	Administration
Disagree	28%	9%	38%
Undecided	44%	55%	41%
Agree	28%	36%	22%

Table 3 reveals that administrative leaders had the highest disagreement of 38% compared to other job categories of the study regarding the statement that university leaders understand their personal weaknesses. Only 22% of the administration leaders had positive views. Academic leaders had an equal percentage of those who held opposite and positive opinions (28% each).

Table 1 reveals that 44% of the research participants agreed that leaders in this university were confident to take calculated risks. Only 25% of the research participants had different views. There was a difference of 5% between the proportion of research participants who had positive views (37%) and those with negative views (32%) regarding that university leaders remain calm under heavy pressure.

Table 4. Cross tabulation between 'at my university leaders remain calm under heavy pressure' and tenure

Tenure (in years)					
	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21 and above
Disagree	26%	37%	31%	34%	35%
Undecided	44%	32%	33%	22%	19%
Agree	29%	32%	36%	45%	46%

Table 4 reveals that the highest percentage of the university leaders with 16-20 years of service (45%) concurred with the statement that university leaders remain calm under heavy pressure. It was also the most common agreement as compared to other tenure categories. Furthermore, the greatest disagreement with the statement was seen amongst those with between 6-10 years of experience (37%) which equates to the disagreement amongst leaders with 21 and more years of experience (35%). The lowest levels of disagreement (26%) was found amongst university leaders with between 11-15 years of experience and the lowest agreement (29%) that university leaders remain calm was among those who had 6-10 years of experience.

Table 1 reflects the highest percentage of 44% of the research participants who had positive opinions regarding the statement that university leaders are willing to take hard decisions. This positive thinking equates with the university leaders' opinions regarding leaders in the university taking calculated risks (44%) with an almost equal level of disagreement.

Table 1 shows that 45% of the respondents supported the notion that university leaders work productively with the university stakeholders (trade unions). Only 26% of the research participants had opposite views regarding this statement. Almost half (49%) supported perception that the university leaders work productively with the university stakeholders (SRC). Only 20% of them had the opposite opinion.

There was general consensus (55%) regarding the assertion that the university leaders work well with leaders beyond the university (government, politicians and business). Only 8% held views in opposition with the latter statement, the lowest percentage as compared to all other variables of the study.

Table 1 indicates that 49% of the respondents believed that the university leaders give constructive feedback to their subordinates. Only 22% of the respondents had different views regarding this statement. Table 1 shows that 39% of the research participants believed that university leaders work constructively with people who are considered as resistors. Only 25% held opposing views.

9. Major findings

The major finding of the study was the small difference in percentage of 7% among the respondents who felt that university leaders learn from their mistakes and those with opposite views. Another major highlight of this study was the equal percentage (27%) of the research participants who shared positive and negative views with the highest percentage of those who were undecided (30%) that university leaders understand their personal weaknesses. Administrative leaders had the highest percentage (38%) of those who disagreed that leaders understand their weaknesses, in contrast to the academics (22%). Another interesting finding of the study was the highest percentage (55%) of the research participants

regarding university leaders working effectively with other leaders beyond the university (government, politicians and business). The latter highest percentage was far higher than all sub-dimensions of the study including the statement that the university stakeholder's work with university stakeholders (internal) such as the trade unions and SRC.

10. Discussion of the results

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the capabilities possessed by university leaders that have the potential to influence transformation in this university. The highest proportion of disagreement (24%) relating to the respondents' perception that leaders learn from their mistakes is contrary with Fullan & Scott's (2009) finding. These researchers mention leaders who are willing to admit to and learn from errors as having personal capability. This finding also confirms the view by researchers (Service & Carson, 2013) that leaders should reflect on their mistakes. The largest percentage of the research participants who concurred that university leaders were prepared to take calculated risks (44%) support the view of Fullan & Scott (2009) who assert that to have the personal capability includes being confident to take calculative risks. This is echoed by Ramsden (1998) that university leaders should be risk takers. This was further concurred by Mendenhall et al. (2008) that leaders should be developed to handle paradox, perplexity, ambiguity and uncertainty. While the abovementioned researchers concur with these findings, their arguments are not grounded on empirical studies as the case may be in this study and were conducted in developed countries.

Almost half of the respondents who suggested that university leaders were willing to take decisions were aligned with claims by Fullan & Scott (2009), Mendenhall et al. (2008) and Mabelebele (2013) on the capability associated with higher education leadership, which includes a willingness to take responsibility and make hard decisions. This finding is further corroborated by Makgoba & Chetty's (2010) opinion that the merger between the University of Natal (UN) and University of Durban Westville (UDW) demonstrated decisive leadership as an ingredient for meaningful transformation. The arguments advanced above by Fullan & Scott (2009) and Mabelebele (2013) are generally based on higher education institutions without any link to specific merged universities. In contrast, Makgoba & Chetty's (2010) study was closely linked to this study as it was focused on the merger of two institutions which are closely located with similar historical backgrounds (predominantly White and Indian universities).

A high percentage of the research participants confirmed that university leaders do work with internal stakeholders and mostly with leaders beyond the university (55%). This has been evidenced by Stubbs (2009) who cited the SRC as a means to bring transformation in South Africa. Such agreement has also been echoed by researchers such as Olsen (2000) that during restructuring and reform, trade unions are generally involved and during merger processes the leadership task team should meet with unions and staff associations. Furthermore, the research findings on the university leaders working with leaders beyond the university is concurrent with the view of Ramsden (1998) that university leaders are good at networking, are skilled at political and at strategic alignment. While this study partly touches on the views of the latter researchers, it extensively tested the perceptions of the research participants regarding whether DUT leaders work with leaders beyond the university (government, politicians and business).

Conclusions and recommendations

The study observed that university leaders lack the personal capability of learning from their mistakes. This indicates that leaders replicate mistakes that do not promote transformation in this university. Furthermore, this study concludes that the university leaders do not understand their personal weaknesses which is closely linked to the previous finding that leaders do not learn from their mistakes. Another major finding of the study was that almost half of the respondents concurred that university leaders are willing to take hard decisions. Though, half was constituted of those who disagreed and undecided on the matter. This concludes that more than half of the respondents were uncertain about the decisiveness of the university leaders which is a sign of an impediment to transformation. This study finally concludes by revealing that university leaders work productively with leaders beyond the university as compared to the internal stakeholders (SRC and trade unions). This clearly shows that the university leaders are more interested in establishing, maintaining or improving external relations or partnerships rather than internal ones.

This study had limitations as there was a paucity of published material on almost all variables of this study relevant to HEIs located in developing countries. Another limitation was on access to information relating to the leadership capability framework of the university. Failure to interview senior leaders who occupy critical positions (including Finance and Maintenance) which are alleged to be untransformed in HEIs proved to be a limitation to the study findings.

This study should be replicated in other merged universities in South Africa as the way to develop remedial comprehensive plans where commonalities

exist. Future researchers should extend and add greater depth to this study which investigates leaders and determines the views of all stakeholders within HEIs. A longitudinal study should be conducted by future researchers by using qualitative approaches including in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. This study provides the following recommendations in order to address the aforesaid gaps identified by the study findings:

♦ The university should develop an appraisal system to evaluate leaders' personal weaknesses and strengths and leaders should be appraised by all key stakeholders on activities performed by them. The university leaders should scan the university environment during university, faculty/departments and divisional or sectional strategic plans with the aim to identify leaders' mistakes, allowing for the development of initiatives aimed at alleviating them through personal improvement plans.

♦ Three Tier (tailor made) Leadership Development Programs (Junior and middle, senior and executive management levels) should be developed in order to enhance leaders' capabilities and respond to the needs of the university as based on the deficiencies identified above.

♦ The university should design and implement a performance management system for the university leaders, tailored in such a way that leaders are evaluated by their subordinates there by allowing for their weaknesses and strengths to be identified. This will assist the university leaders to understand their personal weaknesses or deficiencies which could be corrected through leadership or executive development programs.

♦ The university should develop a leadership capability framework that will assist in tracking the levels of capabilities possessed by the university leaders at a certain level and should be linked to the performance management system and on promotions.

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