

A MODEL OF EFFECTIVE CHALLENGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF CHAIRPERSONS IN PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES IN THAILAND

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Abstract: Chairperson is an academic leader in Public and Private Higher Educational Universities in Thailand. This study mainly emphasizes on Private International Universities. There is a widespread perception of a lack of good leadership in our society in the phase of increasingly challenging problems and needs. This study emphasizes mainly on coping with demand and change in the market, and the expectation of stakeholders from private international universities. Learning, leading and progressing are deeply intertwined and we need to regard each other as worthy of attention caring and involvement if they are to learn together. It is in fact reciprocal. The main objectives of this study are to explore the roles chairperson perform as chair and the challenges chairpersons confront while performing their roles as chair, and what strategies they use to deal with the challenges. Finally develop a model of effective challenge management strategies will be developed for the chairpersons.

Keywords: Model, Challenge Management, Strategy, Chairperson, Private International Universities in Thailand

Introduction

Leadership is the backbone of all institutions and organizations. Leadership has presented a major challenge to practitioners and researchers interested in understanding the nature of leadership decisions. The primary role of any leader is the unification of people around key values. Leadership is a process and influence through which a leader influences others to accomplish set goals. It is a highly valued phenomenon that is very complex (Westerberg, 2000).

Background of the Study

Leadership development is never an event; it is an ongoing, often arduous, process. Outstanding leaders base their hopes for the future on what they have learned, through assessing their experiences. Through personifying change, they inspire others to master its fears. In higher education implacable external forces combined with the nature of the academic culture, the fundamental values and beliefs of academic and other university staff to produce a potent mixture (Ramsden, 1998).

Most academic leaders in key positions believe that they play the central role in bringing out effective academic outcomes. Institutions of higher education differ from many organizations, requiring leadership to be a more shared phenomenon than in most profit-focused enterprises. Thus, department leadership requires greater emphasis on

empowering activities than in much other type of organizations (Seagren, Alan T., 1993). The problem faced by the chairpersons are numerous, but the one most serious is maintaining facilities, funding, obtaining financial resources, increasing demand for maintaining quality education expected for new situations. This has now become more important since we are becoming one unit in society. Chairpersons are facing complex challenges, those for which no preexisting solutions or expertise exists. Chairpersons in their positions dare to confront the power structure, display determination, have a positive attitude, integrity and not think only of where one comes from but see where they are taking their institute (Ramsden, 1998).

Private international universities in Thailand have discovered that the study of roles and challenges of chairpersons is popular and potentially quite useful. For the past few years with the technological development, globalization and cultural diversity, chairpersons as leaders in education are facing great challenges worldwide. Educators and leaders in private international higher educational institutions are facing demands for greater accessibility, flexibility cost-effectiveness, quality and competition. There is a tough fight faced by newly established higher educational institutions leaders as their enemies, the old established institutions are already profiting (Ramsden, 1998). Such observations will surely strike a chord with many working in higher educational institutions, as they have to face the ramifications of globalization; the explosion in digital communications and the 'shift' from 'supply driven' to a 'demand driven' market.

The emergence of a number of pan-global open learning systems, not necessarily funded from the public purse, but led by entrepreneurs with a vision of global developments and the desire to reduce unhealthy disparities among people and nations and willingness to strive for mutual respect trust and benefit are evident. Numerous studies have been conducted worldwide on the responsibilities, goal and challenges, and roles of department chairs and strategies used by the chairperson to deal with the challenges successfully.

Chapman (1999) predicted that within 20 years, all universities will be universal in access terms, or nearly so with entry and reentry at multiple points in people's lives; international focus and delivery and robust in their quality and standards; some will be high-cost, high price high status providers. Some universities will deliver a few unique or particular outstanding programs globally, others will organize their programs to meet rising student expectations, focus on delivery and reduce in-put cost per student along with dealing with worldwide competition.

Rationale for Selecting Private International Universities

In recent years, the establishments of private international universities in Thailand have brought drastic changes in the field of education in Thailand. In the past, there were only public and private universities in Thailand. Private

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universities with a long history in many countries, are expanding in scope and number and are increasingly important in parts of the world that have relied on the public sector (Welch, 2003). Public universities have a long way to go because they have to compete with the long established public universities. Globalization has brought dramatic changes in the field of education. This has affected Thailand also. International universities use English as their medium of instruction, which attract foreigners who cannot speak Thai hence they learn in international universities. However, Quality Assurance in this context is very important. While the private sector has been responsible for much of the expansion in higher education, its role in relation to quality is more questionable (Welch, 2003). The researcher chose private international universities for her study because now private international universities are trying to match up with the public universities and would like to determine the challenges they face and strategies they use to cope up with the well-established public and private universities in Thailand. Chairpersons as department leader play this highly competitive global game with fewer resources (Hallinger, 1998). All this requires leadership that understands transformation and are ready to bring change. In Thailand, private higher education has become a principal industry producing labor for the job market (Praphamontriping, 2007 cited in Laura). Due to the establishment of multi-national companies, private international universities have to well establish themselves in Thailand.

Statement of the Problem

The literature on roles and challenges of chairpersons emphasize the importance of leadership and vision for the department. Studies have shown chairpersons are facing complex challenges. Chairperson creates the demand for a new kind of leadership, whether one is working in a public or a private educational sector at a higher level.

A chairperson should evaluate the judgments about the performance of the staff, show the right direction, and express the need for development of the faculty. What is to be measured, how it is to be measured, who is to measure, and the indicators of quality must be carefully considered? The researcher intends to explore the field of work of chairpersons in private international universities in Thailand. To create a positive work environment, chairpersons have to see to the need for faculty development professionally, because the quality of educators needs to be improved upon consistently. Chairpersons as academic leaders of a department can highly influence the staff. Chairpersons can help their department cope with the demands and challenges that the private international universities in Thailand are facing in modern times. Do the chairpersons possess the necessary attributes to lead an institution effectively? The roles of the chairpersons are changing drastically in the modern world. Chairpersons have to be willing to face the challenges and deal with them successfully. Courses offered have to be updated to meet the demands of the employers, which is the biggest challenge of today. According to some reports people in senior positions lack clear vision, purpose

and strong academic leadership. Research shows that students are not happy with the offered curriculum, as it does not cater to their needs.

Purpose of the Study

With growing attention to educational reform and accountability, personnel evaluation has become one strategy utilized in efforts to improve higher education in Thailand. Higher education in Thailand at present is going through a revolution. There are more students, much less public money, and steadily greater pressures from stakeholders, for universities to be more accountable. Leaders in the new millennium need not to see what is right or what is wrong about power and leadership, but emphasize on what works. Academic leadership, at the higher level as the chairpersons of the department, can improve academic outcomes and staff commitment in an exceptionally, rigorous, highly competitive and rapidly altering climate for higher education (Ramsden, 1998).

The purpose of this study is to identify the challenges chairpersons face in private international universities in Thailand while performing their roles as chair and create a model of Effective Challenge Management Strategies for Chairpersons in Private International Universities in Thailand.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on transformational leadership theory.

Transformational leadership is processes that changes and transforms individuals; who then transform and creates change in the institution. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, long-term goals and clear achievable visions.

Transformational leadership is an important approach to leadership by Bass (1978). Bass attempted to link the roles of leadership and followership in order to better reach the set target. In the organizational world, an example would be a manager who attempts to change the company's corporate values to reflect a more human standard of fairness and justice. A set of higher moral values are in the leader and in one's team and all the other members of the organization.

Transformational leadership, according to Burns, involves an engagement between leaders and followers are bound by common purpose, where "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (Burns, cited in Bush, 1978).

The researcher here aims to focus on "the roles and challenges of chairperson as a leader" in private international universities in Bangkok.

According to the theory of transformational leadership, the central focus of leadership ought to be the commitments and capacities of organizational members. Higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals and greater capacities for accomplishing those goals are assured because of extra effort and greater productivity (Bush, Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999).

Research Objectives

To determine the Challenges the Chairpersons face while performing their roles as chair and determine the strategies they use to confront the challenges and finally to develop a model of effective challenge management strategies.

Dissatisfaction with educational institutions effectiveness has led to some experimentation with new forms of organization and governance. It is important to ask whether the educational institutions effectively educate the children and prepare them for an increasingly dynamic technologically advancing world. Institutions have to

Conception Framework

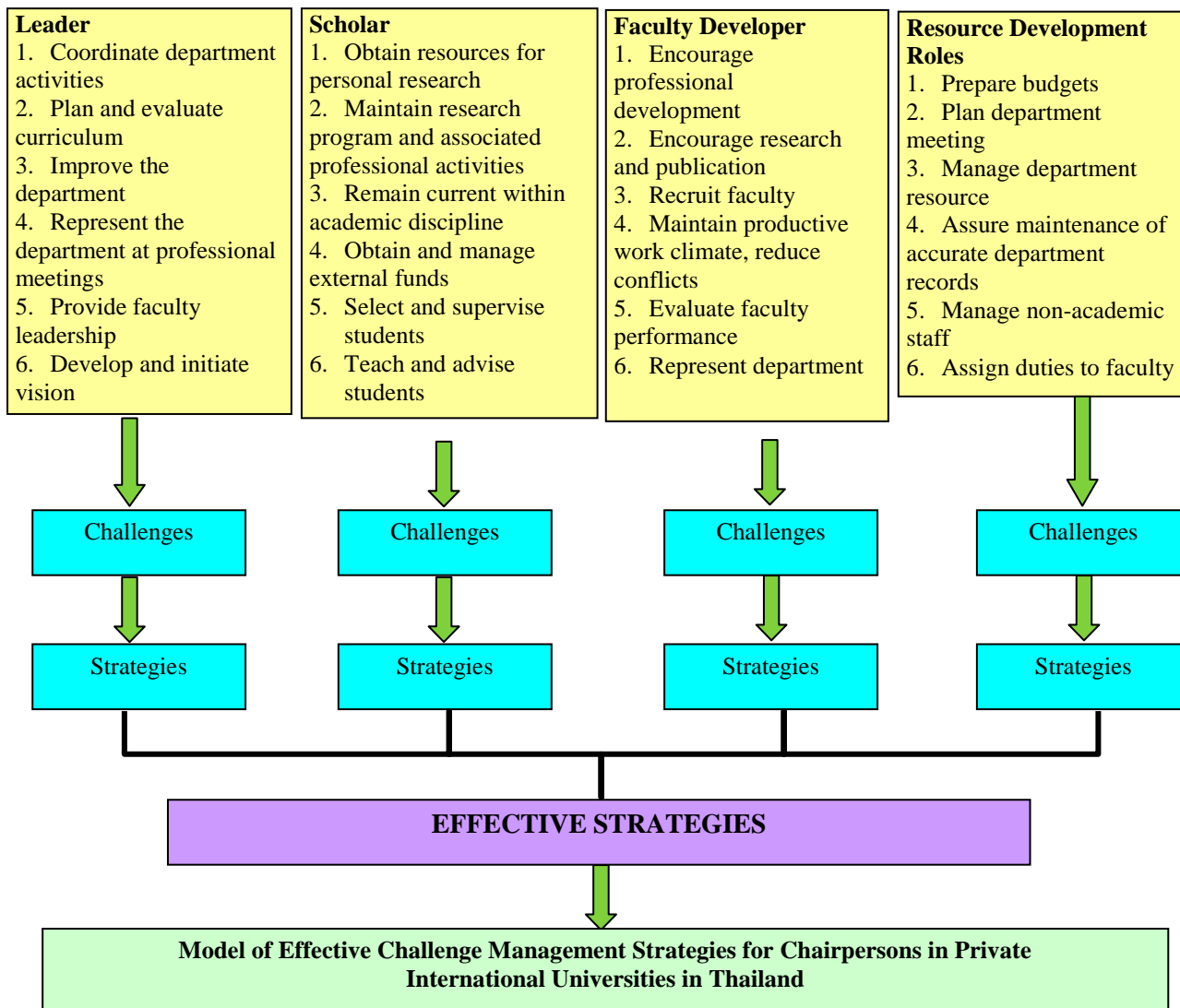


Figure 1: Conception Framework

Significance of the Study

As we look into the 21st century there are many challenges to be faced in the field of education both internal and external that will determine both what children learn and how they learn. In the absence of large-scale improvements educators will be concerned with improving instruction and learning ensuring effectiveness of teachers, strengthening educational institutions, preparing diverse populations for the future and gaining a better understanding of the changing social context and what that means for individuals and nations.

explore policies that affect learning of diverse populations and ignite a discussion about who will be able to teach effectively and lead teachers to educate an ever-changing student population.

The significance of this study will be for the chairpersons as department head in private international universities in Thailand. The researcher intends to research on the challenges confronted by the chairpersons in private international universities in Thailand and to determine the challenge management strategies and then develop a model of effective management strategies that can be used by the chairpersons to deal with the challenges they meet while

performing their roles as chairperson in private international universities in Thailand. The model developed will be new knowledge and it could be successfully used by the chairpersons to confront the challenges, while performing their roles as chairpersons.

1. The model that has been generated from the study could be used by the chairpersons in private international universities in Thailand for self-assessment and improvement.

2. Findings of the study could be used by Private International Universities in Thailand to give training to the potential leaders.

Literature Review

The concerns of this research are based on the theory of Transformational Theory of Bass (1978). Bass attempted to link the roles of leadership and followership in order to better reach the set target. According to this theory leaders and followers are bound by common purpose where leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality (Bass, 1978)

Chairpersons as leaders in universities perform numerous important roles and while carrying out some roles they face many challenges and use different strategies to deal with the challenges.

Questionnaire

To collect the data the researcher administered questionnaire to the 59 chairpersons in the three Private International Universities in Thailand that are Assumption University, Stamford University and Webster University.

Research Objective 1

To determine the challenges faced by the chairpersons while performing their roles as chair in Private International University in Thailand.

Findings for Research Objective 1

As a leader, the first challenge chairpersons have to face is maintaining good relationship with staff and department members 35 chairpersons consider it the greatest challenge as chair.

The second challenge as a leader was answered by 31 chairpersons that is building good relationship with department, members and staff. The third challenge shaping the department mission was answered by 30 chairpersons. Participating in department activities is the fourth chair challenge as a leader answered by 29 chairpersons. The fifth Chair Challenge as a leader, telling people how you feel about what was done wrong was answered by 28 chairpersons. Developing a more integrated asset of skills for effective academic leadership was answered by 27 chairpersons as the sixth chair challenge as a leader. Seventh chair challenge as a leader, communicating the needs of the unit to supervisors was answered by 25 chairpersons. The eighth chair challenge as a leader keeping all levels of relationships in harmony simultaneously was answered by 24 chairpersons. The

ninth chair challenge as a leader managing change was answered by 23 chairpersons and the last chair challenge as a leader meeting the demands of the work was answered by 22 chairpersons.

The first challenge faced by the chairpersons is making decisions on poor performers, which was answered by 32 chairpersons. The second challenge is providing a buffer between extended and central administration that was answered by 31 chairpersons. The third challenge is technologically updating department team and staff members, which were also answered by 31 chairpersons, who implies that challenge two and challenge three are found to be equally challenging by the chairpersons who answered the questionnaire. The fourth challenge is bargaining with supervisors during the budget bargaining period that was answered by 30 chairpersons. Promoting innovations is the fifth challenge that was answered by 28 chairpersons. The sixth challenge is obtaining resources for the unit books, copying machines, computer etc. that was answered by 27 chairpersons. The seventh challenge is evaluating department performance that was answered by 26 chairpersons. The eighth challenge is selecting the right people for the right job, which was answered by 25 chairpersons. The ninth challenge is evaluating staff members, which were answered by 22 chairpersons. The last challenge as a faculty developer is willingly spending money to develop employees' growth, which was answered by 21 chairpersons.

The first challenge as a manager is implementing policies of the unit that was answered by 33 chairpersons. The second challenge is implementing a long-range department program that was answered by 29 chairpersons. The third challenge is allocating budget was answered by 27 chairpersons. The fourth challenge is aligning views among key members that were answered by 27 chairpersons. The fifth challenge is living with the decision everyday was also answered by 27 chairpersons which implies that challenge three, four and five are equally challenging for the chairpersons who answered the questionnaire. Building consensus around department goals is the fifth challenge that was answered by 26 chairpersons. Seventh challenge is too much managing than leading which was also answered by 26 chairperson which implies that challenge six and challenge seven are equally challenging for the chairpersons. Challenge eight as a manager is conducting department meetings answered by 25 chairpersons. The ninth challenge is supporting shared governance that was answered by 25 chairpersons. Challenge eight, nine and ten as a manager was answered by 25 chairpersons which means these challenges are equally challenging to the chairpersons.

Research Objective 2

To determine the strategies chairpersons in higher education use to face the challenges they face that are related to their roles as chairpersons in private international universities in Bangkok.

Findings for Research Objective 2

The first challenge is maintaining good relationship with staff and department members. To deal with this challenge 54 chairpersons use the strategy of making themselves available to talk with the department members. The second challenge is building good relationship with department members and staff 49 chairpersons use the strategy that is willing to help every department member. Shaping the department mission is the third challenge and 47 chairpersons use the strategy to let department members know and understand department mission. The fourth challenge is participating in department activities 50 chairpersons answered the strategy of attending all small and big group meetings of the department. For the fifth challenge, telling people how you feel about what was done wrong 57 chairpersons preferred having one to one meeting with the concerned department members. The sixth challenge is developing a more integrated set of skills for effective academic leadership. 43 chairpersons answered to the strategy that is talk to other department chairs and exchange ideas with them. The seventh challenge is communicating the needs of the unit to supervisors. The eighth challenge is keeping all levels of relationships in harmony simultaneously. 51 chairpersons answered to the strategy of being available to talk with the department members. The ninth challenge is managing change and 46 chairpersons answered train potential leaders as their strategy. The last challenge as chair leader is meeting the demands of the work and 51 chairpersons answered work long hours to be their strategy.

The first challenge as a scholar is initiating publication of articles, journals, etc. 41 chairpersons chose to recommend teachers who do academic work for salary increment, bonus etc. The second challenge as a scholar is dealing with the expectations and desires of the students in the department. 54 chairpersons chose to get feedback from the students as their strategy. The third challenge is creating an environment for professional growth. 48 chairpersons answered to arrange workshops and seminars for the department members as their strategy. The fourth challenge is being guarantor of department quality. 50 chairpersons answered to give feedback to the department members as their strategy. The fifth and the last challenge as a scholar is assessing program quality and identify areas of needed change. 49 chairpersons chose the strategy of doing program assessment.

The first challenge as a faculty developer is making decisions on poor performers. 59 chairpersons answered to the strategy of having a personal talk with the department member(s) concerned. The next challenge is providing a buffer between extended and central administration. 43 chairpersons answered are ready to take responsibility if the decision(s) made do not work as their strategy. The third challenge as faculty developer is technologically updating department team and staff members. 45 chairpersons chose organize technology training for the teachers and the staff. The fourth challenge is bargaining with supervisors during the budgeting

bargaining period. Present the needs of the department members and the department to the Dean, as a strategy was answered by 42 chairpersons. The fifth challenges as faculty developer is promoting innovations and the strategy, organize new teaching technology a workshop was answered by 43 chairpersons. The sixth challenge is obtaining resources for the unit books, copying machines, computer etc. 47 chairpersons answered to the strategy to contact concerned authorities. The seventh challenge is evaluating department performance. 55 chairpersons answered to get student feedback as their strategy to deal with the challenge. The eighth challenge is selecting the right people for the right job. Assign workload and positions in the department according to the skills of the teachers was answered as a strategy by 55 chairpersons. The ninth challenge is evaluating staff members. 47 chairpersons answered to get feedback from department members as their strategy. The last challenge as faculty developer is willingly spending money to develop employees' growth. 49 chairpersons answered send department members to workshops and seminars as their strategy.

The first challenge as a manager is implementing policies of the unit. 46 chairpersons use the strategy of encouraging suggestions given by the department members. The second challenge is implementing long-range department programs. 57 chairpersons use updating curriculum according to the need as their strategy. The third challenge is allocating budget. The strategy to deal with this challenge as a manager use the budget according to the needs of the department was answered by 44 chairpersons. The fourth challenge is living with the decision every day. 41 chairpersons answered make decisions, as problems occur to be their strategy. The fifth challenge as a manager the chairpersons' face is aligning views among key members. The strategy encouraging discussions during the department meetings was answered by 48 chairpersons. The sixth challenge is too much managing rather than leading. For this challenge, 45 chairpersons chose the strategy, delegate work duties and responsibilities. The seventh challenge is selecting workloads. 52 chairpersons answered to the strategy allocate workload appropriately among department members. The eighth challenge as a manager is building consensus around department goals. 50 chairpersons answered call regular meetings of department members as their strategy. The ninth challenge is conducting department meetings. 49 chairpersons answered to the strategy have healthy sessions with department members in friendly atmosphere. The last challenge as a manager is supporting shared governance and 44 chairpersons chose, assign department duties to qualified members as their strategy.

Research Objective 3

To construct a model of effective challenges management strategies of chairpersons in private international universities in Thailand (see figure 2 in next page).

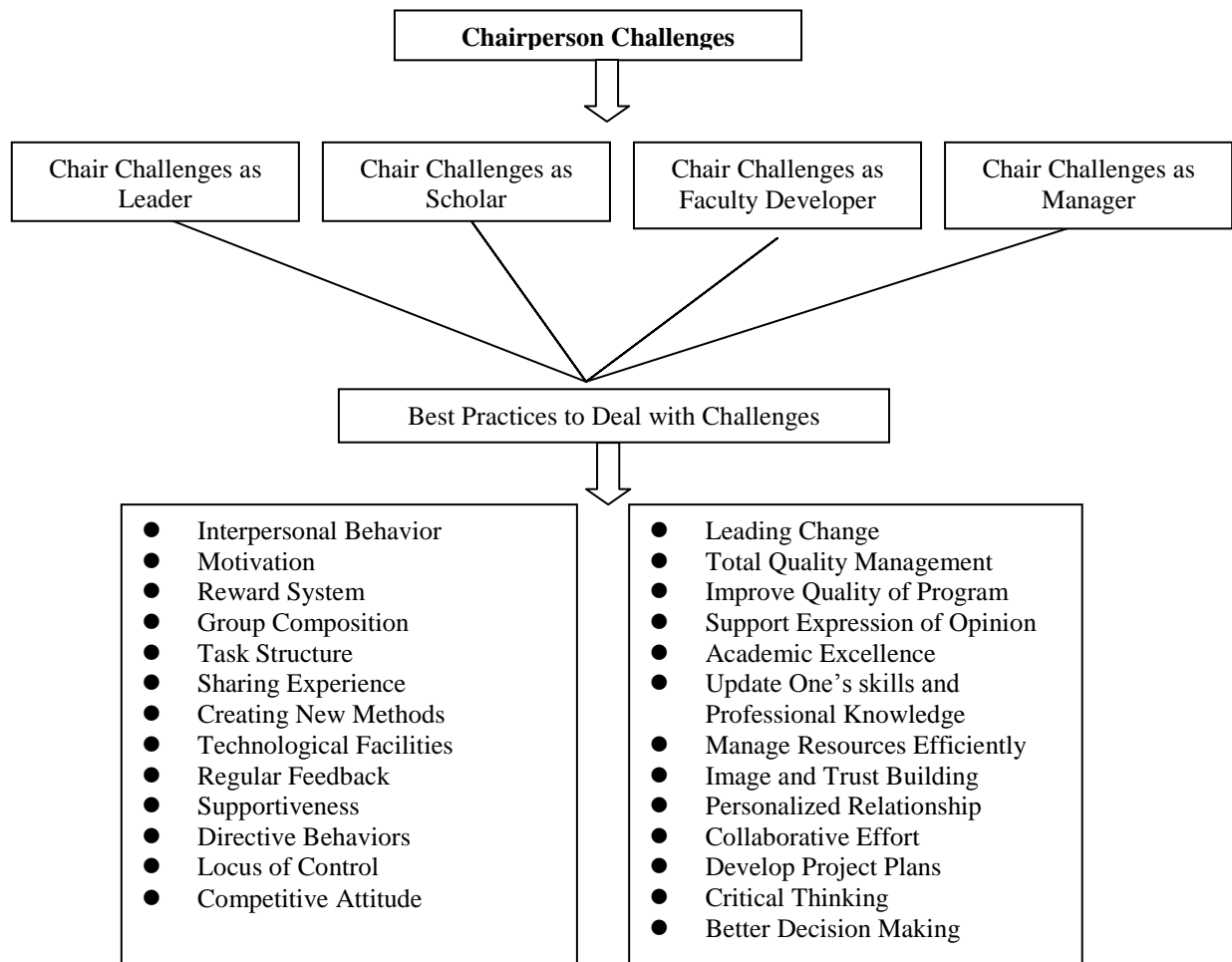


Figure 2: Model of Effective Challenge Management Strategies for Chairpersons

Findings for Research Objective 3

The Model of Effective Challenge Management Strategies was developed from the answers of the chairpersons in the universities that were studied through a questionnaire. The chairpersons who answered the question choosing scale of 4 and 5, which were highest in the questionnaire.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the findings of the study that the chairpersons as leaders play an important part in the department and the institute as well. There are several different and common challenges that the chairpersons face while carrying out their duties as chair and they use some common strategies to cope with the challenges and sometimes they have to make decisions as problems or challenges occur because there are no set strategies that can be used by the chairpersons as the nature of every challenge is different effective leadership is the most important trait chairpersons have to have.

Implications of the Study

The study though limited by population the private international universities offer several strategies that can be

used by the chairpersons in private international universities that were studied.

Recommendations for Practical Applications

1. Findings of this study could be used by the three universities studied to be guidelines when appointing a department chairperson.
2. Findings of this study could pave the way for chairperson and other potential leaders to see the effectiveness of their leadership.
3. Findings of this study could also be used by the universities studied for training potential leaders.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Much research on chairperson leadership remains to be done. The future studies need to have a larger number of chairpersons as their population.
2. A comparative study between chairpersons of private international universities and public universities could be done.
3. The model of effective challenge management strategies could be validated by further studies.

New Knowledge Gained from the Study

The researcher has gained new knowledge from this study. The result of the research show that the chairpersons of private international universities have to go a long way to be able to cater to the needs of the students and stakeholders as well as the market demand and the chairpersons have to be active and on a go all the time if they wish to compete with the other universities that are well established in Thailand. The study indicates that chairpersons face different type of challenges on a daily basis and have to use their insight to deal with the emerging challenges, as there are no set strategies in the literature.

Thus, chair leadership demands for effective leadership without which no leader can be successful.

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