Transformational Leadership Characteristics of College and University Presidents of Title III and Title-V Eligible Institutions

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Abstract

The purpose of this descriptive, quantitative study was to investigate the transformational leadership characteristics of college and university presidents of Title III and Title V-eligible institutions. Private institutions of higher education comprise approximately half of the total post-secondary institutions in the U.S. However, they are at greater risk for closure than their public counterparts. The U.S. Department of Education's Strengthening Institutions Program, also known as Title III, was created as part of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to provide competitive grant support to institutions with higher percentages of low-income students and comparatively smaller general and educational expenditures per student. These institutions were considered vulnerable and at the same time, deemed to be important for the nation's growing number of college-bound students. The Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program, also known as Title V, was established a few decades later to serve institutions with a significant percentage of Hispanic students in addition to the Title III institutional characteristics.

Higher education leadership theorists vary in their views on the efficacy of president transformational leadership in the college and university setting. However, by nature, private Title III and V-eligible institutions are at some risk for survival and president transformational leadership practices could provide the leverage needed for continued existence and prosperity.

The 219 private, four-year Title III and V-eligible college and university presidents were invited to complete Kouzes and Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI) in order to measure their leader behaviors through the LPI descriptors, "Model the Way," "Inspire a Shared Vision," "Challenge the Process," "Enable Others to Act," and "Encourage the Heart." President and institutional demographic information was also collected on gender, race/ethnicity, number of years in current position, total undergraduate student population, percent undergraduate minority population, urban or non-urban campus setting, and institutional religious affiliation to analyze for potential relationships and differences in LPI-descriptor responses.

The data-generating sample was comprised of 146 presidents (66.67%) of private, four-year Title III and V-eligible institutions located throughout the United States. Presidents reported levels of engagement in transformational leader behaviors that were higher than a national average of executive managers, as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) (Posner, 2009). The presidents' strongest transformational leader behavior was reported as "Enable Others to Act," followed by "Model the Way," "Inspire a Shared Vision," "Encourage the Heart," and "Challenge the Process."

Undergraduate enrollment was the only variable in the study that demonstrated significance with regards to the LPI descriptor scores. The relationship between enrollment and president responses to three of the five LPI descriptors approached significance. Undergraduate enrollment approached significance as a predictor variable in a multiple regression of institutional characteristics for two LPI descriptors and was a significant positive predictor for the leader behavior, "Challenge the Process."

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research was to investigate the transformational leadership characteristics of college and university presidents of private, Title III and Title V-eligible institutions and to determine if these were related to selected demographic characteristics of the presidents and the institutions they lead.

Research Questions

1. What is the distribution of president responses to leadership practices, as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self?
2. Is there a significant difference between president responses to leadership practices related to the demographic variable of gender, as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self?
3. Is there a significant relationship between president responses to leadership practices related to the demographic variable of number of years in current position, as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self?
4. Is there a significant relationship between president responses to leadership practices related to the institutional variables of percentage undergraduate minority students and undergraduate enrollment, as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self?
5. Is there a significant difference between president responses to leadership practices related to the institutional variables of campus setting and institutional affiliation, as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory- Self?
6. Do the variables of president gender and president number of years in current position significantly predict president responses to leadership practices, as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory – Self?
7. Do the variables of percentage undergraduate minority enrollment, undergraduate enrollment, campus setting, and institutional affiliation significantly predict president responses to leadership practices, as measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self?

Research Methodology

Subjects

Population 1,041 college and university presidents of Title III or V-eligible institutions located in one of the 50 states and the District of Columbia

Invited Sample Purposive sample of presidents of 219 private, non-profit Title III or V-eligible institutions

Regions and States	Invited Sample	Data Generating Sample
Northeast CT, ME, MA, NH, NJ, JY, PA, RI, VT	61	38
Midwest IL, IN, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD, OH, WI	65	43
South AL, AR, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK. SC, TN TX, VA, WV	64	50
West AL, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY	29	15
Total	219	146 (66.67%)

Materials

The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) Self, 3rd Edition, was used to measure transformational leadership characteristics. The LPI is a 30-item, 10-point Likert scale survey that was developed by Kouzes and Posner to measure for five leadership descriptors, "Model the Way," "Inspire a Shared Vision," "Challenge the Process," "Enable Others to Act," and "Encourage the Heart." A simple demographic survey was used to obtain the respondent's gender, race/ethnicity, and number of years in current position.

Procedures

LPI and demographic data was gathered through two mailings to the invited sample. Demographic data for each respondent's institution was obtained from publically released data of the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Campus setting data was obtained through each institution's self-reported information posted in Petersons on-line profile (www.petersons.com).

Data Analysis

Various statistical tests were performed, based on the nature of the research question. These included the use of (1) descriptive statistics: mean, medial, standard deviation, and range; (2) parametric inferential statistics: independent t-test to compare differences; and (3) correlational studies: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient for relationships and multiple regression to determine the predictive ability of certain variables.

Discussion

Description of the Data Generating Sample

• 110 male (75.34%) and 36 female (24.66%) presidents
• 144 White, non-Hispanic (98.63%), one Hispanic (0.68%), one Asian/Pacific Islander (0.68%)
• Time in current position ranged from less than one year to 31 years (mean 8.02 years; median 6 years)
• Undergraduate enrollment ranged from 26 to 12,038 (mean 1,700; median 1,256)
• Percent undergraduate minority enrollment ranged from 2.05% to 83.82% (mean 24.97%; median 18.74%)
• 44 were urban campuses (30.14%) and 102 were non-urban campuses (69.86%).
• 93 had a religious affiliation (63.70%) and 53 and no affiliation (36.30%)

Summary

• Responding Title III and Title V-eligible presidents reported high levels of engagement in transformational leadership practices. Among the five LPI descriptor responses, the highest average was Enable Others to Act,", followed by "Model the Way," "Inspire an Shared Vision," "Encourage the Heart," and "Challenge the Process." A national 3,252-sample of executive management responses to the LPI (Posner, 2009) followed the same order for the two highest averages, but different in the next three. Overall, the average president response for each LPI descriptor was higher than that of the corresponding national sample executive management response.
• There was no significant different between male and female scores.
• The relationships between president responses to LPI descriptors, "Model the Way," "Inspire a Shared Vision," and "Challenge the Process," and undergraduate enrollment, approached significance.
• The predictor variable of undergraduate enrollment approached significance for "Model the Way" and "Inspire a Shared Vision".
• Undergraduate enrollment was the only predictor variable that showed a positive statistical significance with regards to predicting president responses to the LPI descriptor, "Challenge the Process".

Conclusions

There is a paucity of studies on this distinct group of institutions and their status, challenges and successes would add considerably to the body of literature for higher education. The presidents of the private, four-year Title III and Title V-eligible institutions who participated in this study have provided a new insight into the high levels of transformational leader behaviors practiced by the leaders of institutions whose students' financial needs are greater and whose institutional financial resources are limited.

References

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2007). *The leadership challenge* (fourth ed.). San Francisco: Jossey- Bass.
Posner, B. Z. (2009). *Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) data analysis*. (August 2009).