

CHAPTER THREE

VICE-CHANCELLOR ROLES IN UNIVERSITIES: GLOBAL AND AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVES

3. Introduction

This chapter seeks to contextualise the study of university leadership roles within the domain of Australian higher education. Literature from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe are also reviewed in order to explore comparative higher education contexts. These cross-cultural comparisons are important, as the majority of higher education leadership research has come from UK and US contexts both of which reflect significantly larger and older university systems. As will be discussed, research in Australia has been more limited in relation to this topic but nonetheless offers important insights to current understandings of the roles of Vice-Chancellors.

The previous chapter noted numerous reviews of Australian higher education and individual studies into institutional issues over the past 50 years (refer to Marginson & Considine, 2000; Meek & Wood, 1996 for a comprehensive overview). Detailed investigations have been undertaken in many European countries (Bargh et al., 2000; Neave, 1988; Shapiro, 1998; Shattock, 1997, 2003, 2006) and perhaps the most studied sector of all, the USA, (Balderston, 1995; Bensimon et al., 1989; Birnbaum, 1988, 1992, 2000; Birnbaum, Bensimon, & Neumann, 1989; Clark, 1995, 1998, 2004; Gade, 1992; Green, 1997b, 1997a; Green & McDade, 1991; Kerr, 1963, 1984; Neumann, 1990, 1991). The United Kingdom, too, has contributed a body of literature on university leadership roles (Lockwood, 1996; Middlehurst, 1991, 1993; Middlehurst & Elton, 1992; Middlehurst & Gordon, 1995; Shattock, 1997, 2006; Taylor, 1992). The Australian picture remains relatively obscure in this critical area. This is curious given the critical commentary directed at university management outlined in Chapter Two and the significant changes reported to have occurred over the past 20 years.

Rarely do Vice-Chancellors in Australia express public views as to the nature of the role, although some have hinted at broad requirements. Professor Gavin Brown, in his inaugural lecture at Sydney University, stated that "...management, in itself, is relatively easy - the real need is leadership. This country needs leadership of its universities and leadership by its universities" (Brown, 1996, pp8-9). What sort of person is needed therefore, to lead the universities through these turbulent times? The view of Professor Malcolm Nairn, then interim Vice Chancellor at the University of New England (UNE), was that "Strong business and financial skills are a must for today's university executives" (Nairn, 1996). Who among the current Vice-Chancellors could claim such specialised skills? Further, if Nairn was correct, what does this mean for the traditional career path and development of academic staff that aspire to these roles? Before answering these questions, the next section briefly examines the nature of a university's role before moving on to discussion of specific research on Vice-Chancellors.

Literature on the roles of university leaders (a convention will be adopted for this thesis where titles such as President; Vice-Chancellor, or Rector will all be referred to as leaders) are spread over a number of national contexts and approaches. The structure of this chapter examines these in the following topic areas:

- A brief discussion on the role of universities in the current Australian context;
- Research from the United States;
- Research from the United Kingdom;
- Research from the Australian context on governance and leadership; and
- Individual accounts from Australian Vice-Chancellors

3.1 The Role of the University in Modern Australia

"Fools act on imagination without knowledge; Pedants act on knowledge without imagination. The task of a university is to weld together imagination and experience." (Whitehead, 1950, p.140)

One cannot understand the importance of leadership in universities without contemplating the very nature of what universities currently stand for. Sir Zelman Cowan, then Vice-Chancellor at the University of Queensland, used Cardinal Newman's definition to argue they had the purpose of "...the provision of a liberal education which consciously aimed at producing gentlemen, not through external polish, deportment and manners, but rather through the training of the intellect" (Cowan, in Harman & Selby Smith, 1972, p.16). This definition is steeped in the Oxford/Cambridge tradition, where scholars literally learned, lived, and ate together within the city precincts of their universities. These institutions were characterised by very small student numbers, where professors or tutors were in extremely close and frequent contact with their students, and where close geographical boundaries literally defined the concept of collegiality (Roberts, 1947).

According to Katz and Kahn (1978) universities serve two purposes. "They are concerned both with the training or socialising function and with the creation of new knowledge" (1978, p.147). These authors describe the role of universities in broader societal and organisational contexts. They define four genotypic functions that operate as sub-systems of the larger society: productive or economic organisations; maintenance organisations; adaptive structures; and managerial or political organisations or functions (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p.145). It should be noted, however, that Katz and Kahn have a relatively idealistic understanding of what university education meant to students at the time of their writing. They held the view that students (called consumers by the authors) valued learning as an intrinsic motivating factor that would drive consumption. This would become apparent, according to the authors, as leisure time increased and people turned to higher education to help enhance their intellectual and spiritual existence.

Katz and Kahn define economic organisations as those which "...are concerned with the creation of wealth, the manufacture of goods, and the provision of services for the general public..." (1978, p.145). Maintenance organisations "...are devoted to the socialization of people for their roles in other organisations and in the larger society" (1978, p.145). They include schools in this definition and by implication universities. They also place universities in another category "adaptive structures".

These structures are defined as knowledge creators and the developers and testers of theories – in other words the research function of universities.

Economic organisations are defined thus because of their technological orientation and that they depend on feedback from the marketplace. Katz and Kahn argue these organisations are generally better equipped to deal with change than are organisations that emphasise the maintenance function (1978, p.165). This has real implications for universities if the authors are correct in light of a consistent observation that dramatic change is now the order of the day for organisations and society generally. It should also be noted that universities are now expected to be market responsive. That is, a direct consequence of reduced government financial support has meant that universities must operate in a competitive market place both to attract students and revenue. The question needs to be asked therefore “have the systems of management and structure in universities adapted to meet these new demands?” The final organisational category, according to Katz and Kahn, the managerial or political functions are “...concerned with the adjudication, coordination, and control of resources, people, and subsystems” (1978, p.145). This may not be an idealised role of universities, but is certainly an issue which is increasingly gaining attention in the higher education literature (see Considine, 1988).

Slaughter and Rhoades argue that “[i]n the early years of the twenty-first century, the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime is ascendant. It is displacing, but not replacing others, such as the public good knowledge regime or the liberal learning regime” (2004, p.305). This commercialisation of higher education, according to these authors, also referred to as entrepreneurial universities or corporate higher education has created difficulties that universities are now required to manage. How do universities now respond to pervasive market forces across all academic and non-academic functions?

Thus, the changing nature of government support (both financial and political) has serious consequences for universities. The very nature of what a university should be is now problematic. As they become dependent on market forces so to they lay themselves open to losing control of their own futures. An organisation that must

adapt to meet market demands, by definition, must hand over control of what that organisation is to outside influence. This is completely at odds with the traditional concepts of universities and is turning the very nature of what universities used to believe was their role on its head. An example of how some are responding to this new environment is the University of Western Sydney. This University has advertised 10 week programs to train people in how to become stock and station agents or real estate sales people. Western Sydney would no doubt claim they have the right to deliver programs in whatever area they choose. Clearly they have perceived a market niche in these courses. It would not be unreasonable, however, to assume these courses have one reason for existence and one reason only, that is, to make money. Whilst there may be a legitimate need for programs of this type in our modern society, one could question how they fit with the traditional concepts of a university education.

The fact that universities are now resorting to the provision of non-traditional, revenue raising programs highlights how universities have lost control of the public agenda in terms of what they should be doing in developing the minds of the citizens of the future generations. Universities like Western Sydney will continue to offer programs that have the makeup of a traditional liberal university education, but recent observations from the former Federal Minister (Dr Brendan Nelson) complicate matters. He complained during a Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) Four Corners program:

Why is it, in a country where we are bleeding in physics and chemistry and biology and humanities and social science, why are we running courses in golf course management, surfboard riding, paranormal, scepticism, aromatherapy, you can do make up application for drag queens at Swinburne (Fullerton, 2005)

The Minister is not pleased, apparently, that universities have delved into subjects that are clearly far outside traditional higher education discipline areas. The universities may argue, however, that these programs are essential to raise much needed revenue.

As a consequence there is a concern that universities may become distracted from their traditional roles in order to guarantee their survival (financial viability). Marginson and Considine (2000) make this very point. They argue universities are suffering from a decline in capacity to be educationally and institutionally innovative “corporate rather than cultural” reducing everything to meet corporate objectives. Blindly imitating business may diminish the qualities that have traditionally made them so valuable to society (Marginson & Considine, 2000, p.243). Financial viability is a critical assessment criterion in these modern times. The Green and White papers on higher education in New Zealand (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1997, 1998) were quite specific in establishing this as an essential requirement for maintaining university status and support. Yet Smith (a former Australian Vice-Chancellor) challenges a common view of universities as being institutions of academic integrity and healthy intellectual creativity. He quotes a Chair of a Board at a Canadian university:

The university’s internal paradigm is discipline-centred and constrained. It minimises institutional loyalties and vision. It defines scholarship narrowly – largely peer reviewed publication is the easiest form of such activity to measure. Consequently, it devotes between five and ten years to the training of succeeding generations of academics as researchers; perhaps a few weeks – at best – to training them in pedagogy: and virtually no time at all to preparing them for academic management and administration (Pannanbaker, 1992, in Smith, 1992, pp.57-58).

This Chair was an outside business person who reflected a view that Vice-Chancellors and their colleagues would have to become much more familiar with in response to changing governance requirements as the Nelson Review passed through the Senate in the Australian Federal Government in 2005.

Universities are in crisis, according to numerous authors (Clarke, 1998; Coady, 2000; Coaldrake & Stedman, 1998; Gottliebsen, 1996; James, 1998; Jones, 1999; Marginson & Considine, 2000). These cries are not a recent phenomenon, according to Aitkin (2001) and it is sobering to read Veblen (1918) who bemoaned the

encroachment of the “business men” into university management and leadership in American universities. Where does higher education sit at the start of the new millennium in the public consciousness? What value do the citizens of our respective countries place on these institutions? What is the role of university life? Pelikan (1992) has undertaken a reexamination of the “Idea of the University” based on Cardinal Newman’s (1852) original discourse on this matter. Pelikan observed that the Newman ideals still exist and are still important. Universities should be there to extend knowledge through teaching, that knowledge should be diffused into society through publishing, and has a moral obligation to serving society (Pelikan, 1992). Glassick and his colleagues, revisited Ernest Boyer’s ideas of scholarship in their attempt to contextualise scholarship (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997). In summary they share Pelikan’s views that the discovery and integration of scholarship are fundamental roles of universities. They also argued for scholars to break down disciplinary barriers to allow the diffusion of learning within universities, not just outside them.

Altbach (1998) has this to say on the position of universities in modern western society:

With its roots in medieval Europe, the modern university is at the centre of an international knowledge system that encompasses technology, communications and culture. The university remains the primary centre of learning and the main repository of accumulated wisdom. While it may be the case the university has reached the end of a period of unprecedented growth and expansion, it remains a powerful institution. In the knowledge-based society of the twenty-first century, the university will remain at the very centre of economic and cultural development. (Altbach, 1998, p.347)

This view is positive but not universally shared, for there are many who now feel the role of the university is under threat as never before. Corporate ownership of knowledge, as in the case of Microsoft, and access to the global internet services are providing access to information in ways unheard of even 10 years ago. A former Australian Vice-Chancellor (Gilbert, 2001), suggested this latter point is one of

significance for universities as their competition now transcends political or geographic boundaries. At the heart of this change is technological change. Borderless learning is an accepted term in the modern university environment, yet its impact may yet be more dramatic than we can currently envisage, according to Gilbert (2001).

In a time of continuous and rapid change it would seem a matter of some importance that the management and leadership of our universities should be under scrutiny. Some argue that universities have lost their leadership status in the public domain (Jones, 1999). No longer do governments believe tax payer dollars should be used to prop up these institutions to the levels of decades past (Saravanamuthu & Tinker, 2002; Stilwell, 2003). Diminishing funding, dramatic increases in student numbers, relatively low salaries, and increasingly poor morale (Meek & Wood, 1996) indicate that things are not running well in Australian universities. Universities have been on a diminishing slope of funding support from government for the past 20 years in Australia. This is a trend that was preceded in the UK following the Jarrett Report (1985). Most Australian universities now claim to be generating approximately half their recurrent income from non-Commonwealth Government funding sources, compared to a figure of less than 30% in 1989 (Anonymous, 2001, p.20).

Selected 1998 statistics from the Australian Department of Education, Employment, and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) reveal the following funding / revenue statistics:

In 1998, the Commonwealth will provide a total of \$5.5 billion in funding to higher education institutions. This includes \$4.9 billion in operating grants, including a capital component of \$260 million and a research quantum component of \$219 million; \$38.2 million for capital projects from the Capital Development Pool; and a research programme totalling \$450 million. Estimated total income for Commonwealth-funded institutions in 1998 is \$8.05 billion, including revenue from fees and other private activities. (<http://www.deet.gov.au/highered/unis.htm>)

The New Zealand picture tells a relatively similar story:

In 1997, over 214 000 students were enrolled in the public tertiary sector and over 34 000 attended a private training establishment (PTE). Students are working towards qualifications in a wide range of subjects at all levels on the National Qualifications Framework. (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1998, p.2)

At the time, New Zealand has seven universities, 25 polytechnics, four colleges of education, three wananga, 11 Government Training Establishments, and over 700 private training establishments. “This is a high number of tertiary institutions for the size of our country, and they offer courses at widely different levels. A significant number of these institutions are either small or very small” (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 1998, p.2).

In the complex and dynamic context of higher education in Australia the least understood role is that of the Vice-Chancellor. Effectively these people are the CEO’s of their organisations. They have a responsibility to their governing body (Council or Senate). They are all on fixed contracts and all are under one form of performance review or another. They have budgets in the hundreds of millions of dollars and responsibilities for staff of between 1500 to 5000 people. In total their student client base is approximately 650,000 in population and they are increasingly seeking to expand their income through charging fees for overseas students in the lucrative global higher education market and through selected domestic fee paying programs. A recent report indicates one in five students in Australian universities come from overseas and now number approximately 175,000, representing an export dollar value to the tune of A\$4.2 billion, out earning wheat, beef, and wool (Noonan, 2003, p.6).

Staff, too are increasingly facing scrutiny as they attempt to satisfy management demands that finances are managed in more responsible and transparent ways. Programs, courses, even discipline areas must now show why they should be retained within tighter financial constraints. Downsizing, outsourcing, sticking to the knitting – these are the mantra of senior university management. In short, Vice-Chancellors are running complex and competitive enterprises. While the Nelson

Review states they are not businesses they are operating under a number of important business principles (Nelson, 2003, p.15).

3.2 The Vice-Chancellor's Role in Australian Higher Education

Universities have not done a particularly good job in showing leadership in modern society, according to John Ralston Saul (Saul, 1999). Individually, Vice-Chancellors have come in for criticism because of their lack of leadership (James, 1998; Swain, 1998, p.viii). What Vice-Chancellors do in their roles, however, has received little attention in the Australian context except for a conference that was devoted to this issue in 1994 (Department of Employment Education and Training, 1994). David Sloper has written extensively, particularly on the demographics and social characteristics of Vice-Chancellors (Sloper, 1979; 1983; 1985; 1986; 1987; 1989a; 1989b; 1994a; 1994b) and more recently at least one Vice-Chancellor, Don Aitkin, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra, has written about the role from a practitioner's perspective (1997; 1998; Aitkin, 1993; 1994; 2001). Marginson and Considine (2000) have examined leadership and governance issues from a multiple stakeholder perspective. Finally, Becker's (2001) Masters thesis compared performance characteristics (e.g. personal judgment, integrity, understanding financial outcomes) between Vice-Chancellors and private and public sector CEOs in Australia in order to determine key differences and potential synergies, opening up implications for movement between sectors for senior executives.

Middlehurst (1993) summarised the roles of UK Vice-Chancellors to include: "clarifying and determining direction" (1993, pp.99-100) which is akin to visioning and setting some picture that the institution can identify with and work towards; "positioning the institution" (1993, p.100) which involves both developing strategies (linked to the vision) and the establishment of high academic and management standards (particularly in relation to finances) that place the institution's reputation in good stead to the outside world; "improving the climate through communication" (1993, pp.100-1) which involves setting the "tone" and morale of the institution through informing, consulting and listening to the internal stakeholders; "decision taking and adjudication" (1993, p.101) which relates to the appropriate use of power in acting decisively; "institutional representation" (1993, pp.101-2) which covers a

range of lobbying roles in the external environment. This collection of “roles” is heavily linked to notions of leadership characteristics, a perspective that dominates Middlehurst’s analysis. In that sense they are not surprising as they reflect other views of the roles of Vice-Chancellors such as Green (1997a, 1997b). “Clarifying and determining direction...managing change,...setting the tone,...overseeing education and research, ...relating the institution to its external constituents,...securing resources and overseeing their use,...and finally overseeing operations (Green, 1997a, pp. 36-9). A reasonably contemporary examination of UK Vice-Chancellors (Bargh et al., 2000) took a slightly different perspective to the above examples by noting that Vice-Chancellors now perform roles that include “crises management...they had to take on more politicized roles, ...they had to learn new skills to cope with an increasingly intrusive policy environment,...and they had to engage seriously with the heterogeneity of the system” (Bargh et al., 2000, pp. 32-3). The latter may in fact refer to competencies required by Vice-Chancellors but they are related to the roles Bargh et al., (2000) believed were a consequence to changes in the UK system post Thatcherism. Nevertheless, the research conducted by Bargh et al. represents the most sophisticated examinations of the role in recent times. Their multi-method, qualitative research design captured significant detail of the daily role activity of Vice-Chancellors.

Sloper’s work on Australian Vice-Chancellors generally focused on “...the legal and formal basis to the office; appointment procedures and selection criteria; a social characteristics profile of incumbents in 1963, 1973 and 1983; incumbency patterns from 1963 to 1986; and work patterns of incumbents in 1986” (Sloper, 1994a, p.iii). Sloper’s approach to his study (personal interview, review of formal documentation, and a review of V-C diaries over a 14 day period in 1986) allowed, perhaps for the first time in Australia, outsiders to gain some insight into the complexity of these positions. Sloper’s findings were important at the time and provide a useful platform on which to build a deeper picture of the role of Vice-Chancellors. For example, he noted that at the early part of the 20th Century half the Vice-Chancellors had their first degrees from overseas (mostly the UK) but that this had changed by 1988 to approximately two thirds from Australia and one third from various overseas universities, mostly the UK (Sloper, 1994b, p.21). By 1993, the discipline areas of

the Vice-Chancellors were dominated by three areas. Science was represented by 33%, followed by social science and arts with 25% each. None came from a business discipline background (1994b, p.24). By 1993 the major career profile of the Australian Vice-Chancellors overwhelmingly reflected the academic tradition (97%). This indicated a trend away from appointing people with government or industry experiences as 20% of appointments came from these domains in 1963 (Sloper, 1994b, p.25). This was not to suggest the Vice-Chancellors had no experience outside their universities as at 1993 figures approximately half had regular responsibilities to various government and statutory bodies. These statistics suggest, however, that university Vice-Chancellors brought a relatively consistent academic management perspective to their universities. With the Dawkins changes post 1988, however, things have become much more challenging for the incumbents.

3.3 The Vice-Chancellor as CEO: Corporate Manager or Academician?

There is no doubt the role has changed dramatically over the past 15 years. A new super hierarchy of Executive Deans, Pro Vice-Chancellors or Deputy Vice-Chancellors has grown to support the Vice-Chancellor. Bessant (1995) and Gallagher (1994) liken the new level of senior university administration to the State and Federal Senior Executive Service (SES), a model linking very high salary packages to demonstrated performance outcomes. Lockwood (1996) also sees similarities in roles between senior civil servants and senior university managers emerging in the UK, although these appear more apparent in the post 1992 universities. Bessant sums up the issue below:

These developments also clear the way for a government (perhaps in the not too distant future) to demand that universities consider for appointment to these SES positions managers from industry and commerce who have had no experience of the university culture so that universities can more readily meet 'national and community needs. (Bessant, 1992, p.230)

Becker (2001) investigated leadership and management roles of Australian Vice-Chancellors with specific objectives to compare perceptions of their roles to those of public and private sector CEOs. Becker's broad aims to her study were:

To determine how congruent with the literature the perceptions of Vice-Chancellors are about the importance of leadership/management characteristics to the role of CEO (Vice-Chancellor) of a university;

To determine how congruent with the literature the perceptions of private and public sector CEOs are about the importance of these characteristics to their roles;

To reveal empirically to what extent Vice-Chancellors' perceived important leadership/management characteristics are common to private and public sector and university CEOs; and

To ascertain to what extent Vice-Chancellor perceptions about the importance of these characteristics match with their perceptions of their own management/leadership styles (Becker, 2001, p.2)

Becker's normative (questionnaire based) study provides some perspective by which to judge Bessant's (1995) and Gallagher's (1994) rather more speculative, but nonetheless pertinent, comparisons of these roles. There is an undeniable logic in seeking to determine the potential collision between private and public sector industry practices with those of the role expectations and behaviours of the Vice-Chancellors if evidence of the shift of universities to these models is valid. Becker compares position advertisements for Vice-Chancellors over the period 1986 to 2000 that illustrated reasonably stark differences. To seek more detailed comparisons of possible changes in the roles the university handbook descriptions below can further illustrate change in the system. In the case of the University of New England, (UNE) under the heading "Functions of the Vice-Chancellor" on page 100 of the 1973 Handbook, it stipulated:

The Vice-Chancellor shall be charged with the duty of promoting the interests and furthering the development of the university.

Under the Council and subject to the Act and By-laws there under and to any resolution of the Council, the Vice-Chancellor –

(i) Shall be responsible for the academic, administrative, financial and other business of the university; and

(ii) Shall exercise a general supervision over all persons in the service of the University and over the welfare and discipline of the students of the University.

The Vice-Chancellor shall be, *ex officio*, a member of every Board, Faculty and Committee within the University and, except in the case of the Finance Committee, he may, if he so desires, preside at any meeting of such Board, Faculty, or Committee.

The Vice-Chancellor shall have such authority as may be necessary or convenient to give effect to the provisions of this By-law

Nothing in this By-law shall affect the precedence or authority of the Chancellor or Deputy Chancellor. (University of New England, 1973, p.100)

Thirty years later, the requirements of the office had changed in important ways as illustrated below:

Functions of the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor is the chief executive officer of the University and is responsible for the leadership, management and development of the University and the realisation of its stated mission.

Under the Council and subject to the Act, the By-law and these rules and to any other rules made by and resolutions of the Council, the Vice-Chancellor:

(a) is responsible for directing institutional planning and development and for the implementation of University policy with respect to academic and other relevant matters, and for formulating the University's annual budget; and

(b) is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the performance of the University and its constituent parts in relation to its academic, financial and organisational goals and policies.

The Vice-Chancellor, in exercising the duties and powers and fulfilling the obligations of the position, has such authority as may be necessary or convenient to give effect to the provisions of the Act, these rules and any other rules made by and resolutions of the Council.

The Vice-Chancellor is to be, *ex officio*, a member of every faculty, school and committee of the University and any like body within the University and, except in the cases of the Finance Committee and the Audit and Compliance Committee, may preside at any meeting of such, faculty, school, committee or body.

Upon recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor, the Council may appoint Deputy Vice-Chancellors and Pro Vice-Chancellors. These officers shall have the functions conferred upon the Vice-Chancellor but shall not be exercisable otherwise than in accordance with an authorisation in writing signed by the Chancellor or the Vice-Chancellor; save that the Vice-Chancellor may, by written notification, terminate the operation of any such authorisation.

Nothing in these rules affects the precedence or authority of the Chancellor or Deputy Chancellor. (University of New England, 2003, p.69)

The two sets of criteria show quite dramatic differences with the more recent heavily influenced by corporate demands for accountability, financial supervision, and strategic management.

The examples outlined above represent the official University line and have a degree of homogeneity about them, although the capacity to negotiate, particularly with outside players such as private business, is one area that Vice-Chancellors are

increasingly seen to be in need of significant skills. This is in contrast to the traditional American position where a very high fundraising focus has been a requirement for many years (Bargh et al., 2000).

A significant part of Becker's research focused on a comparison of demographic data with self-reported leadership descriptors from Vice-Chancellors based on the Farkas and Wetlaufer (1996) leadership styles. Becker also looked at perceptions between Vice-Chancellors and private and public sector CEOs in relation to the importance of a range of management competencies derived from the research of Hunt and Wallace (Hunt & Wallace, 1997; Wallace & Hunt, 1996). Table 3.1 below gives an example of the competencies without explanations as to their meaning (Becker did not provide detailed definitions for the competencies).

Table 3.1: Sample Competency Elements from Becker (2001, p.86)

1. Able to learn from past failures
2. Acceptance of accountability
3. Accurate problem diagnosis
4. Achievement orientation
5. Analytical capacity
6. Appraising and evaluating stag (sic) performance
7. Attendance, punctuality and time usage
8. Awareness of interpersonal differences
9. Awareness of organisational mission
10. Building team morale

Becker's results found some consistent responses from the Vice-Chancellors on leadership styles. Of the five leadership descriptors from Farkas and Wetlaufer (1996): Strategy; Human Assets (people focus); Expertise (a market savvy approach); Box (rule driven, quality focus); and Change (change agent focus) the most popular choice of leadership style was the strategy descriptor "I act as the University's chief strategist, systematically envisioning the future and specifically mapping out how to get there. I delegate day-to-day operations to others and focus on big picture questions" (Becker, 2001, p.95) as being their dominant style.

In comparing management/leadership characteristics of private and public sector CEOs with those of Vice-Chancellors, Becker found some interesting results. A set of 91 items were ranked as to their importance in terms of performing the role of CEO. As Becker discovered, some large differences occurred between groups in this study. For example, “*vision for organisation’s mission* (my italics) is ranked by Vice-Chancellors at #2; is ranked by the private sector at #26; and by the public sector CEOs at #52” (Becker, 2001, p.108). The table below illustrates clear differences between the three groups in the comparisons.

The data below shows Vice-Chancellors are much more similar to public sector CEOs (they share 5 items) and they are much less similar to private sector CEOs (only two elements are shared). As Becker observed, the Vice-Chancellors seem to perceive the need to devote a considerable energy to strategy and future visioning. This may be indicative of their reliance on government funding and policy shaping, but this is speculative. The private sector CEOs seem to be far more focused on getting the job done. This may reflect a greater degree of freedom to manage their businesses compared to Vice-Chancellors. Again, this is more speculative. It may be the case that the private sector is a much more dynamic environment that requires a greater immediate attention to what is happening.

Table 3.2: Ten Highest Ranked Elements (Ranks 1-10) (Becker, 2001, p.109)

Rank	Vice-Chancellors	Private Sector CEOs	Public Sector CEOs
1	Personal integrity	Personal integrity	Capacity to initiate and implement change
2	Vision for organisation's future	Understanding financial implications of decisions	Personal integrity
3	Awareness of organisation's mission	Projecting appropriate image – self confidence	Judgment perception
4	Capacity to initiate and implement change	Identifying opportunities	Projecting appropriate image – professionalism and self-confidence
5	Judgment perception	Ability to learn from past failures	Projecting appropriate image – commitment / enthusiasm / personal drive
6	Motivating others	Negotiating effectively	Problem solving ability
7	Projecting appropriate image – commitment / enthusiasm / personal drive	Problem solving ability	Accurate problem diagnosis
8	Development of organisation wide strategies	Personal time management	Negotiating effectively
9	Capacity to take the initiative	Capacity to initiate and implement change	Awareness of organisation's mission
10	Delegating effectively	Achievement orientation	Ability to withstand great pressure

Leadership seems to be an obvious requirement for these positions and this domain occupies most US and UK research on Vice-Chancellors and presidents.

Negotiating and undertaking extensive public relations activities both locally and nationally also seem to be common requirements of the job across national contexts (Creech, 1997).

Shattock (2003) examined leadership in a number of UK studies. He concluded that Vice-Chancellors needed to listen (to the internal constituency presumably), to be able to be persuasive, to engender decision making environments and to “shape a university vision in partnership with the academic community and lay governors”

(2003, p.92). As will be discussed in later chapters, these conclusions reflect characteristics of both case study universities.

Shattock is taken with Burton Clark's notion of the *strengthened steering core*. Clark (1998; Clark, 2004) believes successful universities depend on a committed and cohesive central decision making groups that engage academic **and** management groups. Universities (and vice-chancellors) need to be able to build institutions that have internal flexibility with traditional academic and management boundaries opened up to more flexible models. Further, universities must develop more diversified funding bases. Shattock has been accredited by Clark (2004) as being responsible for the ongoing success of Warwick University in the UK for following just this imperative.

Clark also insists that the traditional academic heartland must be onside. Further, it must agree to move in the spirit of the newer entrepreneurial strategies of the institution. This requires departments to be prepared to take on more entrepreneurial responsibilities. New programs, partnerships, and an opportunity to be integral to the internal steering group's decisions can facilitate more responsiveness here. Finally, Clark insists that a new entrepreneurial culture must be fully integrated inside the institution. This may start slowly but the aim for management is to develop, through time, an institution that is truly integrated across all departments and staff.

3.4 A Personal Account of the Role of Vice-Chancellor Examined

A personal account of the role is provided by Don Aitkin (1997; 1998; Aitkin, 1993) former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra. He presents a varied and generally optimistic overview of the role. "...I find the job at once exhilarating, creative, stimulating, tiring, depressing, and despairing. It is never ever dull" (Aitkin, 1997, p.3). His account of a typical year in the life of a Vice-Chancellor (in this case 1994) is interspersed with descriptions of tedium (over 140 scheduled committee meetings during a given year – not including unscheduled meetings), gastronomic exercises (143 lunches and dinners), and the exciting and challenging prospect of working with people who are "...extraordinarily creative, effervescent and productive, but occasionally inclined to lapse into backstreet brawls and character assassination" (1997, p.7).

In a previous paper (Aitkin, 1994) acknowledged the role preferences of the CEO and the institution intertwine to help define what the Vice-Chancellor does at a given time. He or she may move from receptive chair to leader to tough manager on any given day (1994, p.107). The various stakeholders may have quite different expectations of the role, however. “Powerful deans will be looking for a Chair; universities looking for a big push up the status ladder will be hoping for a Leader; universities whose systems are in disarray will be looking for a Manager (1994, p.107). Aitkin recognises the point that each incumbent brings his or her own individuality into the role. Some will be better at public relations exercises, some better at financial management, some better at academic leadership. Irrespective of individual differences the incumbents bring, there are the myriad day-to-day functions that job advertisements cannot detail and that the incumbent cannot escape.

Some aspects of the role appeal to us, others are burdens. There is a lot of up-front, public-gaze representation in the role; not everyone likes that. There is the ceaseless flow of paper, telephone calls, meetings; some cope with that better than do others. There is a lot of eating and drinking, very little of it haute cuisine in standard; not everyone has the stomach for it. To the Vice-Chancellor, remorselessly, come for final decision and action most of the tricky, awkward, evil matters in the university that all people hate to deal with: the outcomes of manslaughter, suicide, rape, the incompetence or malevolence of a staff member, dreadful accidents, personal breakdown and other tragedies (Aitkin, 1994, p.107).

But there are aspects to the role that are less obvious. Aitkin (1997) refers to the importance of the Vice-Chancellor to retell and reshape organisational legends and stories. A Vice-Chancellor is in a unique position to contribute to the legends and myths of the organisation. When they talk, no matter on how trivial a matter, people tend to listen. It is also important that the Vice-Chancellor believes in what it is they are speaking about. Whether it is a prepared speech or one of many impromptu speeches, it is essential for the new Vice-Chancellor to learn the organisation’s history or risk early failure (Aitkin, 1997, p.6). The value of myths, stories and

legends as they contribute to the organisational culture and day to day organisational life, are very powerful, according to Boje (1994) and Kaye (1996). They take on resilient symbolic power that helps shape perspectives and performances in organisations.

Organisational myths tell us about heroes and life in human systems. As we hear or read each new story, we extend our focal range for seeing our organisations as they really are. Every myth serves to magnify our vision. Our capacity to understand is enhanced by the zoom and wide-angled lenses myths give to our eyes (Kaye, 1996, p.xix).

Aitkin (1997, p.6) also stresses the importance for the Vice-Chancellor to "...appear rational, whatever the reality, as well as coherent and consistent". This may seem to be stating the obvious, but Aitkin has identified an area that is often ignored (or taken for granted) when discussing the skills and behaviours of senior managers. Vice-Chancellors are human and we need to acknowledge that rationality is a highly individual trait. Levinson (1994) and Cooksey and Gates (1995) contend that a CEO's capacity to deal with highly complex (even chaotic) tasks may be too much for some individuals. Levinson (1994) cites a number of cases of company failures in the United States that he argues are the result of a lack of conceptual capacity by CEOs combined with systemic shortcomings within the organisation to deal with highly turbulent environments.

Cooksey and Gates suggest that CEOs are often slow to respond in times of turbulence partly:

...because of their natural resistance to change arising out of a self-involved commitment and attachment to what has felt good and worked well in the past (organisational narcissism), guilt associated with changing what someone else has accomplished, failure to appropriately monitor the environment in which they are embedded (including an inability to learn from outcome feedback), and an

affinity for the power and position granted to them in existing organisational structures (Cooksey & Gates, 1995, p.19).

These issues hold great significance for the performance of the Vice-Chancellor and the university. Clearly an individual's capacity to deal with the complexity of these positions varies dramatically. It may also be the case that the traditional career path of academic administrators may not equip all with the skills and training to achieve success at this level.

Aitkin identifies a number of other less obvious roles associated with the position of Vice-Chancellor that include:

- Political awareness. Be seen. Mix with your constituents. Above all "The most important task of the Vice-Chancellor is to keep this competition (the faculties and schools) at a healthy level and to build strong commitment to the university itself" (1997, p.7).
- Leadership. Aitkin is committed to the view that Vice-Chancellors must be leaders in the turbulent times faced by universities. In his view collegiality is often a mechanism which is used to "...stop things happening rather than to prompt innovations..." (1997, p.7). To be an effective leader the Vice-Chancellor must have an agenda or a sense of mission. Increasingly Vice-Chancellors are expected to get things done, to achieve for the good of the university. Steering the ship is a common metaphor.
- Committee Management. Finally, he stresses the importance of committee management. Aitkin suggests that the efficient operation and facilitation of the university committee system is vital. Avoiding unnecessary structural change and enhancing the operation of the committee system can lead a reduction of significant time and energy wasting processes. If information gets caught in what he calls "the languid feedback loop (Academic Board to Board committee to Faculty Board to Faculty Board committee to Academic Board committee, and back to Academic Board) the forward direction of the university can falter." (Aitkin, 1997, p.8)

One can compare Aitkin's "insider perspective" to Trow's regularly cited descriptions of leadership roles in universities (Trow, 1985). Trow contends that the effective leader demonstrates their role along four dimensions. These include the "symbolic" dimension where the incumbent demonstrates the ability to express and embody the institution's goals and values. Aitkin agrees with this. Secondly, Trow contends the "political dimension" (Aitkin compares this to being like the mayor of a village) is critical to managing. Here the head should be able to deal with conflict and competing demands. It is this particular area that role-theory, discussed in the following chapter, provides a framework to articulate and assess the multiplicity of dimensions of influence on the Vice-Chancellor. Green (1997b) also notes the complexity of dealing with multiple stakeholders (1997b, p.144). Shattock (1997) suggests this component of the role will require leaders to adopt a "corporate flair and corporate imagination" (1997, p.33) in order to deal with this ever expanding stakeholder base. Trow suggests that the "managerial" role is also critical. Here the Vice-Chancellor should be competent in dealing with financial and staffing matters among other functions. Aitkin argues that the Vice-Chancellor should as much as possible keep their hands out of the day to day management tasks. Finally, Trow argues that the leader must be able to recognize and support the "academic" functions of the institution (Trow, 1985, p.143). Marginson and Considine (2000) contend that Vice-Chancellors in Australian universities are moving further and further away from this role due to pressures to manage external environments.

A close inspection of the requirements, listed above, indicate that the final part of the question heading this section of the paper, Academician, receives little attention. It would appear obvious that for those who choose to pursue a career as a Vice-Chancellor, the continuance of an academic profile will be almost impossible. Some Vice-Chancellors may long for a return to a time when they could devote time to their particular areas of academic expertise. Some try whilst in office, but they would be in the very small minority. The job appears to be simply too big for any one individual, a view shared by Aitkin and other Vice-Chancellors and supported by other researchers (Bargh et al., 2000). According to Bargh et al. "To senior academics who guarded the 'donnish dominion' the message ... was that, in future,

the authority of Vice-Chancellors should be rooted in managerial competence rather than collegial charisma”(2000, p.34).

Now, more than ever, expectations of the performance of the Vice-Chancellor have become managerially focused. They are much more performance driven. In times of great change or crises people turn to their leaders. How are the Vice-Chancellors coping? The turnover of people occupying these positions is increasing quickly. Discussions with a former Vice-Chancellor suggest the time Vice-Chancellors are staying in the sector is decreasing and is probably well below the traditional seven years. And why should they stay? Ken McKinnon, a former Vice-Chancellor and one who has great credibility in the sector is now making much more money as an educational consultant and has the added luxury of not having to serve his former Canberra Mandarins (at least to the extent he formerly did). McKinnon, it must be acknowledged, has also taken on the role of acting Vice-Chancellor in at least two institutions since his “retirement” from the University of Wollongong in 1995.

Returning to an earlier theme, perhaps the current climate does not make it easy at all for Vice-Chancellors to manage and lead their institutions. “Uni executives ‘lack skills’ for new role” was a headline published in the Campus Review in late 1997 (Osmond, 1997, p.7) and reflected the views of Ken McKinnon who openly questioned the suitability of the current levels of senior university managers to deal with the quite extraordinary conditions existing in Australian universities. In this article, McKinnon acknowledges some of the preliminary findings from the West Review in relation to a trend towards competitive tendering with private providers; and the management of sophisticated business projects and the gap in skills to deal with these strategic matters. No Australian Vice-Chancellor held an MBA degree according to Aitkin (1997) at that time and this is mirrored in a national study in the UK (Middlehurst, 1991, p.144) and the Bargh et al. study of demographic characteristics of British and European university leaders (2000). Soh (2004) reported very little change to the figures reported here. In an assessment of Vice-Chancellor backgrounds, Soh reported only 2.5% of Vice-Chancellors held a management or commerce academic background. Over 80% of Vice-Chancellors had an academic background either in the natural and physical sciences or the social sciences (Soh, 2004, p.14). Very few Australian Vice-Chancellors have had

significant corporate or business experience outside the university sector (as Sloper noted) with McKinnon, formerly of the University of Wollongong, being one of the few.

Professor Brian Smith (former Vice-Chancellor at Western Sydney) commented that he was glad he was not in the job any more, such are the demands (Smith, 1997, p.11). Smith may have been speaking for more colleagues than he imagined. This is born out by the fact that in the 12 month period leading up to November 1997 10 new Vice-Chancellors were appointed in Australian universities.

3.5 Governance and Leadership in Modern Times

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the most recent literature on university leadership and governance as they raise very important questions as to possible changes to the roles of Vice-Chancellors (Bargh et al., 2000; Becker, 2001; Clark, 1998, 2004; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Shattock, 2003, 2006; The Australia Institute, 2001). The Bargh et al. (2000) study focuses mostly on the UK and European contexts (Sweden and the Netherlands) but does have implications for Australian research in this area, while The Australia Institute (2001), Becker (2001) and the Marginson and Considine (2000) studies focus on the current Australian context.

In this period, Marginson (1997) defined the Australian higher education sector operating within a neo-liberal or market driven environment. “[t]he neo-liberal imagines services such as education as a devolved market or quasi-market in which people operate as consumer-investors, making private choices within a game-structure controlled by government” (1997, p.64). Through potentially ambiguous relationships with government “the separation between government authority and institutional prerogative becomes increasingly blurred” (1997, p.65).

Within this changing social, political, and economic landscape, Marginson (1997) argued universities had to adapt or lose their relevance. As a consequence, the way Vice-Chancellors manage has also changed, as has their role more broadly.

According to (Marginson, 2002, p.421), a new form of executive leadership has emerged, characterised by the formation of a small inner cabinet of management-

focused professionals that operate in semi-isolation from the academic role of the university. Implicitly, this suggests the Vice-Chancellor would have difficulty performing the roles discussed previously that are integral in setting the tone of the university and managing various academic structures.

Marginson (2002) also notes the partial transformation of the governing bodies of Australian universities. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Nelson Review has taken this further and linked the structure and performance of these boards to funding models. These boards now adopt a different kind of interest in their institutions, much more focused on financial performance and market driven imperatives. This has resulted in a marginalisation of the discipline-based schools/divisions/faculties where “identities survive as islands of varying size in a sea of business-speak” (Marginson, 2002, p.421).

Finally, Marginson (2002) argues that discipline based departments are now being broken down to be merged into more diverse school based structures. The net effect of which is to flatten the intellectual capacity through a dilution of academic input. According to Marginson, (2002) senior management in universities view discipline areas as resistant to the new operating imperatives and are regarded as obstructive to a market driven environment. The analysis is compelling and is supported by a number of researchers (Becker, 2001; Bessant, 1995; Coady, 2000; Coaldrake & Stedman, 1998; Marginson, 2002; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Meek & Wood, 1996; Saravanamuthu & Tinker, 2002; The Australia Institute, 2001).

According to Marginson and Considine “The new systems of executive governance are focused almost exclusively upon the office of the Vice-Chancellor” (2000, p.62). These authors claim this move to centralised managerial control and the growth of the senior management structure are a result of policy changes from government. In one sense they are correct, but they don’t explore the consequences of the policy changes, resulting in a more complex, bigger, fast growing system, with multiple Australian and international campuses, on the capacity of Vice-Chancellors to perform. This added complexity may well be having a critical impact on the capacity for Vice-Chancellors to manage in such turbulent times. The system is reportedly signalling this with an ever diminishing turn around time for Vice-

Chancellors in office. Recent data (Soh, 2004, p.17) indicates that the mean time for a Vice-Chancellor's tenure now averages six years but this figure is dependent on the age at appointment. Vice-Chancellors appointed at a younger age have longer tenure on average.

One issue further complicates the analysis presented by authors in this area. They maintain consistently that decision making has moved from the traditional academic power bases of the faculties and the academic boards to a central decision making cadre. They do not, however, present compelling evidence to show what those former "collegial" practices entailed or achieved. It is obvious that the centre of the university management is taking on more and more of the critical decision making responsibilities (Marginson & Considine, 2000; Middlehurst, 1993). However, these decisions are often of a nature that would be foreign to academic boards and councils in the pre-Dawkins era. As a counter point, Aitkin (2001) has expressed reservations about the tendency of some commentators to slip into a revisionist view of university history. Aitkin's main sticking point is that comparisons between current and previous university management practices have little substantive support in relation to the historical issues. Perhaps the real issue that should be of importance to the academy and the centre, therefore, is can the academic integrity of the institution be maintained through the change processes universities are engaged in? Marginson and Considine (2000) believe this is not the case. New entrepreneurial activities have marginalised the academic core. More non-academic staff are evident in areas such as technology or marketing. The "academic heartland" is being by-passed. A long term consequence here is to alienate those very people who produce the "product" is the implication (Marginson & Considine, 2000, p.241-2).

Marginson and Considine (2000) also suggest that Vice-Chancellors are deeply involved in reinventing the nature or perception of their roles. They talk about the "small university in Queensland" (2000, p.68) seeking to join the elite, all through the Vice-Chancellor changing their title to Vice-Chancellor and "President". The authors refer to this title as "Napoleonic" (2000, p.68). They acknowledge that this new title may seek to instil confidence abroad and respect at home (2000, p.68) and this may be correct. After all, Aitkin does talk about setting the symbols. The

implicit cynicism of the authors' comments undercut a valid question "does the new title indicate a change in the role?"

Other roles have emerged post-Dawkins, according to these authors. Vice-Chancellors have been encouraged to take more initiative in changing the shape of their institutions through restructuring programs partly based on government funding incentives to achieve efficiency gains. In addition, the burdens of dealing with an expanding constituency, particularly abroad has added pressure to build support teams at the senior executive level to take over many of the daily management tasks. This creates an additional problem for a Vice-Chancellor who seeks to fulfill the role as described by Aitkin earlier in relation to remaining "sensitive to the ideas and values embodied in the legend and to their emotional force" (Aitkin, 1997, p.6). In other words, can they stay close to the academic heart of the institution?

Marginson and Considine define four styles of Vice-Chancellor (they acknowledge that some Vice-Chancellors may have aspects of more than one style). The Domestic Leaders are characterised by a recognition their institutions need to form a strong local identity and not to become distracted by trying to become a Harvard or a Sandstone (the traditional capital city institutions such as Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Queensland). These Vice-Chancellors recognise their place in realistic terms reinforcing the values of excellence but also acknowledge that they are different to the larger Sandstone edifices. These institutions are likely to have a technology background or be located in regional settings.

The Rationalisers are characterised by a focus on strong and sound internal management practices. The Rationaliser Vice-Chancellor seeks to establish an environment characterized by efficiency and relative simplicity. This ambition seeks to reduce collegial obfuscation and to shore up central decision-making authority, partly by corralling the Deans to central administrative roles. The definition becomes a little confusing when they assert that these Vice-Chancellors are really interested in money and policy issues (2000, p.82) for the institution. Aligned to these goals is the practice of measurement as a means of maintaining performance (and control) over academic power bases within the institutions.

The Entrepreneurs are the new evolutionary species to emerge post-Dawkins. These Vice-Chancellors are quite comfortable with internal issues being managed by others and these are peripheral issues for these Vice-Chancellors. These Vice-Chancellors are much less focused on tightly controlled processes driving the Executive. They may well act on plans or initiatives with marginal input from below the Executive. Flexibility is critical. The personal style of the Vice-Chancellor is critical here according to the authors. These people are far more overtly political and they would need to be given their avoidance of process. This is the visionary role of the Vice-Chancellor characterised by the university engaging in many new markets and ventures. Central Queensland University's dramatic expansion of campuses into other cities throughout the Eastern Australian seaboard may well be an example here.

The entrepreneurial Vice-Chancellor is more likely to be successful in modern higher education contexts according to Clark (2004). He argues that the development of an entrepreneurial culture can be "viewed as a movement from idea to belief to culture to saga" (2004, p.90). This entails a gradual shift of the institution's shared view of its place and need to adapt to new imperatives. This reflects a transformation according to Clark, and requires a commitment from the Vice-Chancellor to take a long-term objective to achieve this.

Finally, they define the Facilitators, a Vice-Chancellor role that embodies a focus on internal transparent decision-making and a practice of maintaining traditional academic values. Getting a better share of the best high school graduates and valued forms of collegiality that don't bog the institution down but which allow the institution to thrive within these limited parameters are the imperatives for these institutions.

Irrespective of the categories above, the universities studied by these authors also reflect a trend to operate "kitchen cabinets" (Marginson & Considine, 2000, p.87) at the senior executive decision making level. These often semi-formal groups meet on a regular basis (this may be weekly) and this is seen as a rather opaque process that shores up power within the group. It is not demonstrated clearly how new these cabinets are as a means of communicating and decision making in universities.

In discussing the changing roles of Councils and Academic Boards, Marginson and Considine (2000) highlight some important issues impacting on governance and management of modern universities. University Councils are changing in shape and size due to government requirements. Less internal representation and more external representation is one consequence of these trends. As discussed in the previous chapter, Council membership may now well be explicitly tied to funding from the Commonwealth such is the drive to develop a more corporate mode of governmental operation. This has potential strengths and problems for Vice-Chancellors.

Highly skilled financial people can help the university to better understand its financial requirements. This may also lead to fewer “bad strategic decisions” due to these outsiders bringing in their corporate skills. These new appointments may well require a more sophisticated reporting system to them and Vice-Chancellors will need to consider the implications here. This author has observed a Vice-Chancellor now accompanied by his expert “posse” in a Council meeting in order to be able to address Council enquiries. A former Vice-Chancellor, interviewed for this research suggested that this was something that would never have happened in his day (Matt 2003, pers. comm., 28 May).

As events have unfolded in the universities of Adelaide, Sydney, and RMIT, Councils may also push their governance role beyond stewardship towards hands-on management. With Chairs of Councils increasingly coming from industry backgrounds, political pressures to deal with poor performing universities (or Vice-Chancellors) may lead to significant tensions in their roles. There is no doubt that the relationship between the Vice-Chancellor and the Chancellor is as critical as it has ever been. Yet subtle shifts in emphasis from academic imperatives to corporate responsibility may well require Vice-Chancellors to carefully consider this relationship. This latter point is explored more fully in chapters six to nine.

Marginson and Considine note the emergence of ad hoc senior decision-making groups operating at executive level, removed from traditional collegial process (2000, p.130). This may reflect a sense of urgency in decision-making in the current political and competitive environments in which universities operate. Certainly, traditional committee trails of decision-making may well be circumvented by this

imperative. Consequently, the Vice-Chancellor may well need to be extremely close to the ground in order to better absorb the issues brought forward in these “kitchen cabinets” and this may have workload issues for them. Yet this may not be easy to practice as Aitkin (2001) observes where significant change to these institutions has been the sheer scale of their growth within a rapidly expanding system. Scale brings complexity, a fact that Vice-Chancellors and Councils would need to be conscious of in the performance of their roles.

3.6 Conclusion: Where to From Here?

It seems clear from this review that circumstances are making it extremely difficult for Vice-Chancellors. Turbulence in the system is pronounced. The long-term consequences of adopting recommendations from the Nelson Review are still relatively unclear, although some indicators are starting to emerge.

It is surely no coincidence that Education Minister Julie Bishop's first policy moves in higher education, on fee-paying places and research, are meant to ease the pain of two of the more controversial aspects of the reforms of her predecessor Brendan Nelson. But consider our revelations that James Cook and Edith Cowan universities now join Central Queensland University in the small but growing club of institutions forced to hand back funding because they can't get enough bums on seats. It looks as if Bishop will be grappling with an even more vexing question during her term as minister: Where have all the students gone? (Armitage, 2006)

Increased competition with new universities being welcomed to establish campuses in Australia will also have potential far reaching implications for some existing universities. In a sense then, the roles of Vice-Chancellors may be increasingly dictated by global market forces rather than other drivers such as regional or local needs. Perhaps it may prove heartening to recall the words of an esteemed academic writer on higher education.

Business success is by common consent, and quite uncritically taken to be conclusive evidence of wisdom even in matters that have no relation to business affairs. So it stands as a matter of course that

businessmen (sic) must be preferred for the general guardianship and control of that intellectual enterprise for the pursuit of which the university is established...(Veblen, 1918, p.69).

And again,

“Also, learning is, in the nature of things, not a competitive business and can make no use of finesse, diplomatic equivocation and tactful regard for popular prejudices such as are the essences of the case in competitive business” (Veblen, 1918, p.115).

In summary, much of the existing literature on Vice-Chancellors adopts a leadership perspective that focuses on what Vice-Chancellors do. In the current social and economic climate that higher education exists, it is important to challenge the existing literature by asking questions relating to “how” Vice-Chancellors perform the range of roles prescribed to them as outlined above. This represents a major gap in the existing literature of Vice-Chancellors. “What” they do seems to be reasonably well documented, but “how” they do these things has been largely ignored. The following chapter discusses the importance of defining role in organisational contexts and presents a rationale for adopting a new approach to unpacking the dynamics of role-performance or role-enactment in universities.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

4. Introduction

The preceding chapter highlighted a number of shortcomings in the university leadership/management literature. These included: the tendency for adopting a relatively narrow theoretical perspective in the use of the term 'role' when discussing leadership behaviours; the paucity of empirical analysis of the actual role behaviours as observed; and the paucity of research examining these factors from multiple stakeholder perspectives, both inside and external to, the institutions. This chapter discusses the following issues pertaining to the current research framework:

- The need for a conceptual definition of "role" in the higher education management literature;
- The rationale for adopting Katz and Kahn's (1978, p.141) role-theory model as a starting point for examining the role of Vice-Chancellor;
- The key literature advocating the adoption of the role-theory model in organisational role analysis;
- An examination of the managerial role literature relevant to this study;
- The formulation of key questions relevant to the study of Vice-Chancellor, based on identified gaps in knowledge relevant to role-theory.

The previous chapters discussed a range of university leadership and management literature primarily from the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Australian contexts. The perspectives adopted by the majority of this research focused on leadership theory (Green, 1997b, 1997a; Middlehurst, 1993; Middlehurst & Gordon, 1995), governance issues (Bargh et al., 2000; Marginson & Considine, 2000), or social characteristics (Sloper, 1979, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1989a, 1989b, 1994a, 1994b). There is no doubt this body of research has contributed to our understanding of higher education management and leadership theory. However, few of these

studies adopted a dynamic perspective that acknowledged the ‘system-like’ characteristics of organisational structure and functioning. Further, much of this literature used the term ‘role’ as a ubiquitous descriptor without rigorous conceptual or ontological explanation. As Turner noted in his review of role-theory literature “Many studies seem to incorporate the concept of role as a magical device, when in fact nothing about the investigation or the theory is any different than it would have been had the concept of role not been used”(1985 p. 24). The central purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to discuss relevant role-theory literature with particular emphasis on the concept of “role” as defined by Katz & Kahn (1978), to show how this can be used as a template for role analysis within the context of senior management roles in Australian universities. According to Katz and Kahn:

...in any organisation we can locate each individual in the total set of ongoing relationships and behaviors comprised by the organization. The key concept for doing this is office, by which is meant a particular point in organizational space; space in turn is defined in terms of a structure of interrelated offices and the pattern of activities associated with them. Office is essentially a relational concept, defining each position in terms of its relationship to others and to the system as a whole. Associated with each office is a set of activities or expected behaviors. These activities constitute the role to be performed, at least approximately, by any one person who occupies that office (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p.188).

The preceding discussion lays out a distinction for the term role that suggests a living, dynamic entity rather than a static statement such as that attached to a job description. As previously stated however, “role” has been narrowly conceptualised in a university management literature that frequently adopts a leadership or governance perspective as the appropriate framework of study (Becker, 2001; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Middlehurst, 1991, 1993; Middlehurst & Elton, 1992; Middlehurst & Gordon, 1995). As a consequence, these traditional *top-down perspectives* often fail to examine the multiple sources and critical influences of role performance that may illuminate a more comprehensive *location* of role in context

characterised by "...social locations, behaviour, and expectations..." (Gross, Mason, & McEachern, 1958, p.18).

In order to flesh out the concept of organisational role as it applies to Vice-Chancellors, literature from four areas is examined to provide the conceptual framework central to this research. These areas are: role-theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978); systems theory (Ashby, 1956; Birnbaum, 1988; Boulding, 1956; Emery, 1969; Stacey, 1996; von Bertalanffy, 1968); managerial roles (Hales, 1986; Hales & Tamangani, 1996; Mintzberg, 1973, 1994; Noordegraaf & Stewart, 2000; Rodham, 2000; Sayles, 1964; Stewart, 1989, 1991, 1996), and human resource theory (Snell, 1992; Vancouver, 1996).

4.1 Justification for Role Theory Approach

Bassett and Carr (1996) argue that the "structure of individual work roles within an organization has been treated as a peripheral issue in organization theory" (1996, p.37). The result of this, according to these authors, is that description and prediction of fundamental organisational processes have been largely ignored. In arguing for role-theory as a framework of analysis they believe an opportunity exists to investigate organisations in a way that offers a "fresh level of structural analysis on which to move organization theory forward" (Bassett & Carr, 1996, p.37).

Bassett and Carr raise important points in relation to possible direction of role analysis. They acknowledge role as a process that integrates macro- and micro-level components of organisational behaviour. As they suggest, much attention has been allocated to the macro components of organisational theory, for example, organisational ecology theory, organisational structure, and strategy and performance (Bassett & Carr, 1996, p.37). However, they pointed out important factors operating at the micro-level that should also be considered. For example, "in addition to skill, experience and temperament as the foundations of role structure, there is opportunity to examine the extent to which role-flexibility is inherent in any given role, as well as the extent to which that flexibility is a function of individual choice and initiative or is externally shaped by institutional or environmental forces" (Bassett & Carr, 1996, p.38). This point covers two aspects, the micro-level, and the broader extra-organisational influence on role performance - an area that the Katz and Kahn role model tends to play down.

Katz and Kahn argued for a synthesis of disciplinary approaches to studying organisations and noted that role was a promising concept to pursue as it "...is the summation of the requirements with which the system confronts the individual member..." (1978, p.186). Vancouver (1996) noted that "given the placement of the role-episode between the individual and organisational levels of analysis, it is critical to explicitly understand its relationship" (1996, p.177).

In a study of the processes involved in entering a new institution as its leader, Denis, Langley, and Pineault (2000) integrated ideas from role theory and socialisation to help explain the complex interrelationships between the existing organisational expectations and those of the new leader. Role theory was seen as particularly relevant as it allowed the examination of the "processes" or the "how" behaviours to be examined in context. Heiss (1981, p.94) argued that "...role should be, in a literal sense, the central variable in any role theory. All theories should account for roles and also use roles as key factors in the explanation of other phenomena". Graen (1976, p.1220) argued that basic human resource functions such as recruitment and selection could benefit from an assessment of the role processes as they allow the examination of multiple perspectives and contexts and therefore enrich understanding.

Hales' (1986, p.105) comprehensive review of managerial role literature noted that many empirical outcomes at that time were rather prosaic (see, for example, Mintzberg, 1975) and that little effort had been made to establish relationships between actual work performance and desired work outcomes, an area that role-theory is well suited to address.

There are two respects in which role analysis seems particularly suitable for the analysis of managerial positions and the work activity associated with them. Firstly...the concept of role is most appropriate for positions where there is both a degree of willing conformity with organisational expectations and some possibility of choice on the part of the incumbent...Secondly, the concept of role provides a framework wherein the evidence on managerial behaviour may be situated. The demands or expectations upon the manager do

not simply provide the context but also represent a point of comparison for that behaviour (Hales, 1986, pp108-9).

Hales (1986, p.109) noted that research up to that point had almost exclusively concentrated on actual performance and that there was a need to examine "...role prescriptions, expectations or demands...through an investigation of the expectations held by all (my emphasis) the members of a manager's role-set". Fondas and Stewart (1994) noted, however, in the period following Hales' review, very little effort had been made to utilise role theory in studying managerial behaviours. The literature, according to these authors, had been mostly descriptive, offering little insight into explanations of managerial behaviour. Fondas and Stewart (1994) noted the inconsistency of role definition in the literature. Role has involved a number of perspectives including Mintzberg's "...ten activity groups...some role theorists use it to mean shared expectations held by the role set; others to designate patterned predictable behaviours; and others to refer to the social or occupational position held" (Fondas & Stewart, 1994, p.85).

They also noted that role behaviour had an ambiguous history in definition. For example, the term role has been used "...interchangeably with 'role enactment', 'role interpretation', 'role performance'" (1994, p.85). Fondas and Stewart recommended the adoption of the Katz and Kahn role model to avoid inconsistencies and because it allowed analysis of both behaviours (performance) and expectations. Understanding the relationship between the two is implied by Mintzberg's famous observation of the discrepancy between what is said to be done and what is seen to be done by managers (Mintzberg, 1975). In the Katz and Kahn model (discussed below) role behaviours are actual performance behaviours and role prescriptions are those signals (both sent and received) that are the directions and their interpretations (you/I should do this).

Shivers-Blackwell (2004) argued for a role theory approach to examining various forms of leadership behaviour (transformational and transactional) due to its capacity to integrate personal, interpersonal and contextual determinants of action. Specifically, Shivers-Blackwell examined how "...managers' perceptions of context influence or constrain their utilisation of transactional and transformational

leadership behaviors” (2004, p.41). This author argued that contextual factors were not generally available for both these forms of leadership and thus role theory provided a worthwhile conceptual framework to add to an understanding of leadership theory (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004, p.43). This point is taken up in chapter nine, as important evidence emerged in this research to address Shivers-Blackwell’s points.

Mignot-Gerard (2003), in an empirical comparison of leadership and governance in four French universities, suggested traditional leadership studies in universities focused on how leaders should behave rather than how they actually behaved (2003, p.141). Thus, “...it gives a prospective, de-contextualised image of leadership, which does not emerge clearly from the contrast between the leader as a manager and the leader as a manager of meaning” (2003, p.141). She went on to criticise much of the leadership literature as failing to understand what relations exist between the leader and the various other officials in different organisational levels. Both Mignot-Gerard (2003) and Shivers-Blackwell (2004) appreciated the influence of culture and structure in any attempt to understand leadership roles. Both these issues are discussed in the Katz and Kahn model below.

4.2 The Role-Theory Framework of Katz and Kahn

As Katz and Kahn (1978) noted, organisational role is best understood as a process or social structure and social behaviour. Roles reflect two characteristics, in that they are system like and they are open to environmental inputs and thus are in a state of constant flux (1978, p.3). The relationship between the individual and their supporting environment is central to Katz and Kahn’s role-theory thesis.

We have given the role concept a central place in our theory of organizations...to link the organizational and individual levels by making explicit the social-psychological processes by which organizational roles are defined and role behaviour is evoked in the ongoing organisation. (Katz & Kahn, 1978, pp.186-7)

As previously discussed, the choice to include the role-theory framework has been supported by authors in a diverse array of recent literature including: business network analysis (Anderson & Johnson, 1998); roles and organisational structures

(Bassett & Carr, 1996); leadership in public sector organisations (Denis, Langley, & Pineault, 2000); managerial roles (Fondas & Stewart, 1994; Hales, 1986; Hales & Tamangani, 1996; Martinko & Gardner, 1990; Mintzberg, 1973; Noordegraaf & Stewart, 2000; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1975; Rodham, 2000; Stewart, 1989, 1991, 1996); and systems theory (Vancouver, 1996).

Research into role-theory developed extensively during the late 1950s (Gross et al., 1958) and 1960s and received notable attention with the publication of Katz and Kahn's (1978) seminal text "The Social Psychology of Organizations". Katz and Kahn undertook a detailed explanation of the significance that role-theory played in broadening our understanding of organisational dynamics and managerial behaviour. Role, according to these authors was part of a broader social system comprising the additional components of norms and values.

The social-psychological bases of social systems comprise the role behaviours of members, the norms prescribing and sanctioning these behaviours and the values in which the norms are embedded (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p.43).

Katz and Kahn's work on organisational theory extended that of the social theorists Allport (1962), Merton (1957), and Parsons (1951). They synthesised the social psychology domains and the emergent domain of systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1950) into a more comprehensive theoretical construction of roles in organisations. Their role-model (Figure 4.1 below) represents an open systems depiction of role activity as determined by a number of internal and external influences.

Their model has four critical dimensions relevant to performance. These are (1) the expectations sent by role senders to the focal person (or actor); and three major moderating dimensions that supposedly influence the receipt of and action on those role sending messages – (2) personal attributes of the individuals; (3) interpersonal factors; and (4) organisational factors (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p.196).

The core component of their model is that which focuses on the boxes A to D and the arrows 1 and 2. Arrow 1 represents the role sending link. Arrow 2 represents a feedback loop to the role sender. While this reflects a linear process of

communication and performance feedback, the moderating variables (E, F, & G) provide scope for a less predictable and more dynamic process. This is due to an acknowledgement, by Katz and Kahn, that context influences the role sending process and the role receiving process in significant ways. Organisational factors such as size, age, policies, structures, reward systems, and organisational culture play a part in role performance (Circle E). Circle (F) suggests the Focal Person (that person expected to undertake a role performance) also influences the process through their own personal attributes. According to the authors these factors include values, motivation, and a sense of personal efficacy. But as Pfeffer and Salancik (1975) also suggest, these characteristics may also be physical in nature. For example, there may be influences on role behaviour caused by gender differences (1975, p.144). It should be noted, however, that gender is regarded as a social construction rather than a physical characteristic today (Faludi, 1992). Each of the key components is discussed below.

Circle (G) suggests that the Focal Person also influences the process through their interpersonal relationships with role-senders. Key interpersonal factors would include such things as trust, quality of the relationship and the significance of the relationship.

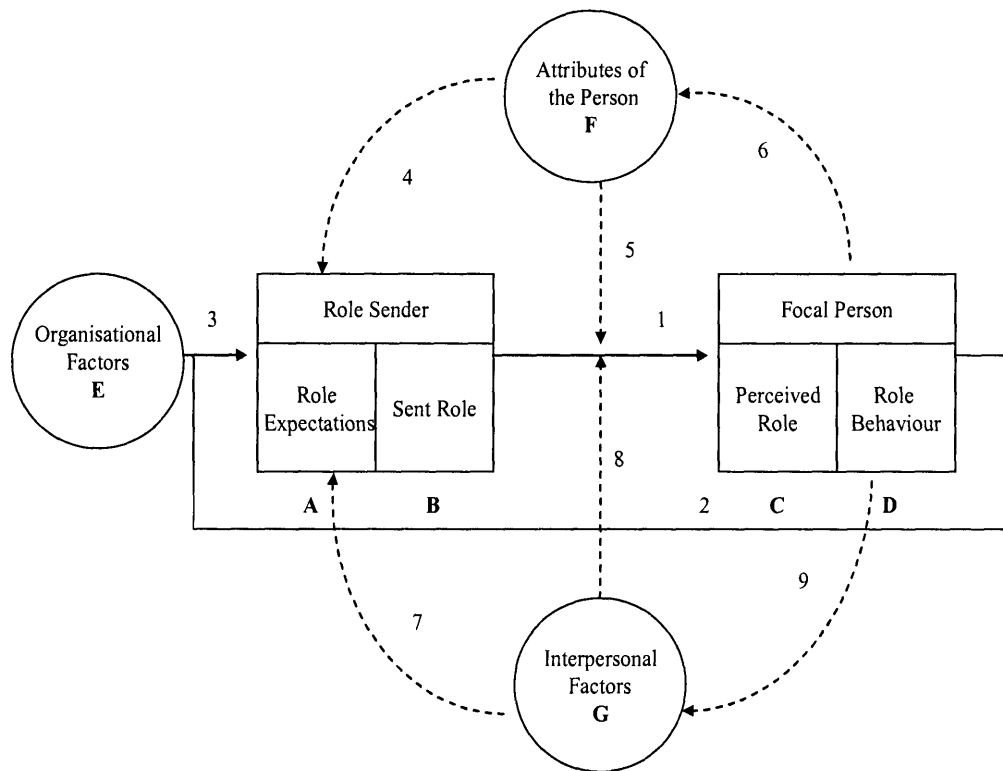


Figure 4.1 A theoretical model of factors involved in the taking of organisational roles (Katz, & Kahn, 1978, p.196)

4.2.1 Attributes of the Person (Arrows 6, 5, 4 in Figure 1).

An individual brings a range of personality characteristics to their role behaviours. These may be developed over time and experience and may be moderated or altered in their current role due to a variety of expectations. For example, individual leadership characteristics may be regarded as a relevant area to explore in relation to this component of the model. This is an area that has received considerable attention in the literature (Becker, 2001; Bensimon et al., 1989; Green & McDade, 1991; Middlehurst, 1991). Katz and Kahn suggested that the behaviour of the focal person may influence their own attributes (arrow 6 Figure 1). For example, they argue that to some extent the person may become what they do. If they are required to play a more hard-nosed leadership style then their behaviour may evolve to take on that

personality characteristic. Self-monitoring theory (Snyder, 1979) would suggest however, that this characteristic would be context specific. Further, these propositions suggest the individual needs to have the capacity to be self-aware enough to adjust their behaviour as required. Snyder (1979) defined self-monitoring in the following way:

At the core of self-monitoring formulation is the proposition that individuals can and do exercise control over their expressive behavior, self-presentation, and nonverbal displays of affect. Moreover, these self-monitoring processes meaningfully channel and influence our world views, our behavior in social situations, and the unfolding dynamics of our interactions with other individuals.
(Snyder, 1979, p.86)

Shivers-Blackwell (2004) agrees that self-monitoring could be an important moderating concept in understanding leader behaviour in her conceptual integration of role theory, transformational and transactional leadership behaviours.

Self-monitoring reflects many similarities to the concept of impression management. Leary and Kowalski (1990) suggest impression management is designed to show an individual's expected characteristics in various situations. Goffman (1956) suggests that people have various public faces that are dropped when the individual moves into the background (or back of stage). Their front-of-stage performances are governed by role expectations according to Goffman. Leary and Kowalski agree. As they noted, "social roles carry expectations regarding how individuals who occupy those roles are to behave" (1990, p.41). In an earlier study of small group leadership Leary and colleagues found that "...leaders of small groups attempted to foster different impressions of themselves depending on the role requirements of the immediate situation" (Leary & Kowalski, 1990, p.41). In this experimental design subjects were told to exhibit either a task or relationship focused leadership style in a range of conditions. The results showed the leaders had the capacity to adapt their leadership style depending on the condition they were put in (Leary, Robertson, Barnes, & Miller, 1986, p.747).

Katz and Kahn also noted personal attributes can moderate the sent role process by influencing role senders as a consequence of a personal style (arrow 4). For example, the focal person may not like bad news due to low self-esteem and thus role sending becomes problematic. Individual personality characteristics may also influence what is received from role senders (arrow 5). For example, personal biases, perception, communications style, and learning style differences can all contribute to degradation in accuracy of received role signals.

4.2.2 Interpersonal Factors (Arrows 9, 8, 7 in Figure 1)

As personal attributes can influence role so, too, can interpersonal factors. Katz and Kahn (1978) refer to factors such as role ambiguity, trust, liking, admiration, and distance or closeness of the relationship as being important to factor into an analysis of role behaviour.

Trust, for example, can be a powerful moderator of role behaviour in organisations according to Reece and Brandt (2005). According to them, trust is "...at the core of all meaningful relationships" (2005, p.200). Lack of trust between people in a role set will invariably impede open and effective communication, thus moderating role sending behaviours. As in the case of personal attributes, these characteristics can moderate role behaviour from a number of different aspects. Rowley and Sherman (2003) contend that academic leadership at any level will not succeed without trust between colleagues, an attainment increasingly difficult to achieve the further the academic leader progresses beyond their academic peer group.

Evidence for the influence of interpersonal influences on role performance can be seen in Graen's Leader Member exchange (LMX) theory (Graen, 1976). This theory is generally associated with leadership behaviour but it is also relevant to role performance in that LMX suggests members of the "in" or "out" groups will receive different role expectations from role senders, partly due to interpersonal issues. Communication patterns, reward distribution, task allocation, social interaction, and status will all contribute to the role-set and subsequent role performances.

4.2.3 Organisational Factors (Arrow 3 in Figure 1)

With clear evidence presenting a significant shift in organisational operating practices and forms in Australian higher education (Bargh et al., 2000; Becker, 2001; Cullen, 1992; Gallagher, 2000a, 2000b; Gilbert, 2001; Harman, 1996; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Moodie, 1995, 2002) there is much to relate to this component of the Katz and Kahn role model. According to Katz and Kahn these influences might include structure, size, culture, industry type, and purpose. Marginson and Considine (2000) contend that change in Australian higher education focus and structure was most significant in the 1990's and probably reflected the biggest changes for some 40 years (2000, p.39). Their metaphorical attempts to label organisational types – “Gum Trees”, “Red Bricks”, “Sandstones” (2000, p.213) signalled that larger issues such as structure and governance are key determinants of organisational functioning. Globalisation, moves to greater managerial operational practices and increasing influence of business and political changes have contributed to a vastly different organisational context for universities. Thus, Arrow 3 (Figure 1) takes on an important dimension in the role theory model under consideration.

Marginson and Considine (2000) noted the relationships between key senior executives have changed according to their research findings. Collegial decision making has been replaced by small “Kitchen Cabinets”(2000, p.87) of senior executive and thus organisational contextual factors may have an impact on role-sending opportunities. It is important to note however, that in conjunction with the other moderating variables in the Katz and Kahn model, there is very little follow-up empirical evidence to completely endorse Marginson and Considine's contentions.

As discussed in the previous chapter, much of the focus of research on leadership in universities adopted models of leadership theory. However, structural and cultural dimensions have also occupied much attention. Discussion on organisational “anarchy” or “loosely coupled systems” emerged in the 1970s as a consequence of research suggesting universities were much less controllable entities from a leadership perspective than people had understood (Cohen & March, 1974; Weick, 1976). These models suggested poorly defined goals, poorly understood technology

and systems, and loosely controlled decision making made for problematic organisational management (Mignot-Gerard, 2003, p.138).

The emergence of the entrepreneurial universities in the 1990s across a wide range of national systems saw cultures and structures tested in environments marked by declining revenue to university systems and increased demands for more adaptable structures and faster decision making, effectively moving decision and power away from faculty to centralised senior executive groups (Marginson & Considine, 2000).

Changes to size, complexity, structure, and organisational purpose are important areas to consider. For example, the greater the degree of formalisation the less freedom individuals have to express their individuality in the carrying out of their roles argue Katz and Kahn. In addition, there may be organisational changes impacting on the role of Vice-Chancellors as a result of changes to governance and reporting requirements. The modern Chancellor (Chair of the governing body) seems to be taking a role more consistent with a corporate model where high level private sector industry expertise appears to be the desirable base for which to select these people. How they interpret their role and how that relates to the behaviour of the Vice-Chancellors deserves close scrutiny in the current higher education context.

At one point the CEO has executive power to dictate certain changes in the organisation or the role system. This legitimate power, however, may not necessarily be defined in precise dimensions such as those of less junior level positions in the organisation. Nor is freedom to change or wield power necessarily unfettered. The role of the “Chair” (of the board) or, in the case of Australian universities, the Chancellor, may create problems for the Vice-Chancellor if there is conflict or ambiguity in the role relationship between those two people.

The literature discussed in Chapter Two highlighted critical changes to the University sector over the past 20 years. These changes have also had an impact on the role of Vice-Chancellor at least by implication but as the following chapters show, by experience. It would appear, on the basis of the current higher education management literature, that Vice-Chancellors are becoming more and more captive to external stakeholder groups due to these changes. While the explicit intent of the

Dawkins reforms was to free up universities to be more self-determining, the literature suggests universities believe they are increasingly under the control of their public service benefactors and, increasingly, private interests who are providing more funding for research and commercial spin-offs from the universities (Bargh et al., 2000; Middlehurst, 1993; Middlehurst & Gordon, 1995). Katz and Kahn underplayed this external influence in their model. Yet this is an increasingly critical area to investigate with respect to the evolving role of Vice-Chancellor as evidenced by changing political and social trends according to a variety of authors in higher education (Clark, 1995; Coady, 2000; Coaldrake, 2000; Coaldrake & Stedman, 1998; Considine, 1988; Gallagher, 2000b; James, 1998; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Middlehurst, 1993; Moodie, 2002).

4.3 Role-Theory Literature

Role-theory has a rich history in the domains of organisational behaviour, anthropology and sociology (Mead, 1934; Merton, 1968; Parsons, 1948). Neiman and Hughes' (1951) early literature review of role-theory research came to a number of conclusions regarding the definition and characteristics of role. They identified seven broad fields of study into role. These were: family, child development, culture norms, social status, deviant social behaviour, occupational groups, and pathological behaviour (Neiman & Hughes, 1951, p.148). They concluded that each of these domains were frequently characterised by poor or vague definitions of role or were developed through often ambiguous empirical designs. Their review identified three common characteristics.

In all the definitions and usages of the concept there is involved either an individual definition of a specific situation or an individual acceptance of a group's definition of a specific situation.

Role behavior, no matter how it is defined, or even when not defined, involves the assumption of a process of symbolic interaction or communication as a prerequisite, which leads then to a further generalization; namely, that man is the only role-playing animal and that this is one of the characteristics which distinguishes man from other animals.

Human behavior cannot be explained or described by the use of traits or other atomised concepts, but must be viewed from the framework of organized and integrated patterns of behavior. (Neiman & Hughes, 1951, pp147-8)

However, even at that time Neiman and Hughes observed,

The concept of role is at present still rather vague, nebulous, and non-definitive. Frequently in the literature, the concept is used without any attempt on the part of the writer to define or delimit the concept, as the assumption being that both writer and reader will achieve an immediate compatible consensus (Neiman & Hughes, 1951, p.149).

As Fondas and Stewart (1994) noted, this problem still exists today. When Sloper (1994a) talks about the 'role' of Vice-Chancellors he does not integrate any definition of 'role' per se in his analysis. Indeed, there is no reference to the role literature in his writing. Similarly, Marginson and Considine (2000), and Bargh et al. (2000) avoid role theory when implicitly or explicitly discussing role as if reader and writer were as one in identifying with the term.

An early line of theoretical development of role theory emerged through Talcott Parsons. Parsons argued that "any system of interactive relationships of a plurality of individuals is a social system" (Parsons, 1951, p.37). This definition applies to any individual role in an organisation, as they are almost always entwined in a plurality of relationships, rules, contexts, and individual differences. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978, p.1) suggest "...to understand the behavior of an organization, you must understand the context of that behavior...organizations are inescapably bound up with the conditions of their environment". These propositions underpin the critical relevance of role-theory approaches to understanding organisational behaviours.

When we talk about 'role' in an organisational context, what do we mean? Parsons argues "The individual actor as a concrete system of action is not usually the most important unit of a social system. For most purposes the conceptual unit of the

social system is the role. The role is a sector of the individual actor's total system of action"(Parsons, 1951, p.190).

This suggests that studying an individual in terms of their leadership qualities, for example, may be restricted. It has been suggested the primary ingredient of "...the role is the role expectation" (Parsons, 1951, p.190) an issue Katz and Kahn developed further. Role-expectations organise, through reciprocity of influence, the behaviour of the individual. Conceptually, this also reflects principles of systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1950, 1968) that are dependent on the notion of feedback loops being critical to the determination of action (Cooksey, 2001; Senge, 1990).

Sargent (1951) defined role as "... a pattern or type of social behavior which seems situationally appropriate to him in terms of the demands and expectations of those in his group" (1951, p.360). However, some roles are more prescribed than others. For example, operating a telephone in a call centre is an extremely narrowly defined role. Here the role occupant must follow a highly restricted list of acceptable behaviours, often determined, by a script of defined responses, to the person on the other end of the telephone. A CEO of a large organisation, on the other hand, may have a vastly more extensive and complex set of role expectations and behaviours in their day to day activity.

Gross, Mason, and McEachern (1958) noted that roles have ingredients of cultural, personal, and situational determinants (p.13). As a social system, they suggested role is a cultural phenomenon which acts as a "blueprint" behaviour (1958, p.12). A further assumption in relation to definitions of "role" is that expectations about the requirements of the role are clear and unambiguous. As Katz and Kahn (1978) have shown however, role-expectations can be both conflicting and ambiguous. In terms of performance of a task by the role occupant, there are a range of criteria which need to be met in order for successful performance to occur. Firstly, the person signalling role expectations needs to be clear in defining the expectations. Secondly, the receiver of these expectations must interpret them accurately. The person in the role must also have the ability to carry the expectations out, together with a motivation level sufficient to drive their behaviour. Finally, the role occupant must have the opportunity and appropriate context to perform the role expectations. Thus,

understanding role requirements, having motivation, and ability are not productive if situational circumstances (machinery breakdown, for example) prevent the task being carried out.

Davis (in Gross et al., 1958) defined role as actual behaviour,

How an individual actually performs in a given position, as distinct from how he is supposed to perform, we call his role. The role, then, is the manner in which a person actually carries out the requirements of his position. It is the dynamic aspect of status or office and as such is always influenced by factors other than the stipulations of the position itself. (Gross et al., 1958, p.14)

Davis's argument is adequate yet underestimates the importance of recognising the potential ambiguity between expectation and performance that Katz and Kahn are far more appreciative of. The importance of the Katz and Kahn model, discussed below, is that it draws to the researcher's attention the critical evaluative connection inherent in role performance between expectation and "doing".

Biddle's review article (1986) noted that there were at least five perspectives in the role theory literature "...functional, symbolic interactionist, structural, organisational, and cognitive role theory" (1986, p.67). Biddle, too, notes the relative confusion in the various role literatures with respect to consistency in definition. Nevertheless, Biddle did agree that there were some consistent characteristics across the literature. Essentially, role usually involves "...characteristic behaviors, parts to be played, and scripts for behavior" (1986, p.69). Further, Biddle agreed that "...most versions of role theory presume that expectations are the major generators of roles, that expectations are learned through experience, and that persons are aware of the expectations they hold" (Biddle, 1986, p.69). In many cases this would also include the expectations held for them by others.

In reviewing the organisational role literature Biddle (1986) noted research had predominantly focused on role conflict and role ambiguity in organisational

contexts. Indeed this continues to be the major focus of organisational role research, often with relatively limited results.

Rowley and Sherman's review article on academic leadership (2003) drew on previous research to illustrate the ambiguity and conflict associated with middle level academic leadership (Deans, for example) and their perceived needs to be both manager and peer. Unfortunately these authors did not produce any concrete empirical evidence to support their contentions for these states of tension.

Much of the research into role conflict and ambiguity has drawn on the scales developed by Rizzo et al. (1970) which were influenced by the earlier work of Kahn and his colleagues examining stress in organisations (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). These scales received considerable support in the literature for their reliability and validity but do adopt a normative stance in role investigation (Biddle, 1986).

4.4 Role as Self.

One author Biddle (1986) did not consider in his review was that of Goffman (1956). Goffman's idea of role probably mostly closely resembles that of the symbolic interactionist perspective in its construction of an evolving dynamic and personal experience. The following section briefly discusses Goffman in attempting to link his ideas to the analysis of role.

Goffman (1956) suggested 'role' is akin to a performance much like we would see in a theatre or movie. In this analysis people who are in 'role' perform according to a set of expectations they either perceive or believe are appropriate. For example, "...executives often project an air of competency and general grasp of the situation, binding themselves and others to the fact that they hold their jobs partly because they look like executives, not because they can work like executives"(Goffman, 1956, p.47). In this instance, Goffman is suggesting that part of the process of being in a role is to project a certain image. This image changes, according to Goffman, depending on the situation. William James illustrated this point almost 100 years earlier in discussing the notion that role is malleable to changing influences,

...we may practically say that he has many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares. He generally shows a different side to himself to each of these different groups. Many a youth who is demure enough before his parents and teachers, swears and swaggers like a pirate among his “tough” young friends. We do not show ourselves to our children as to our club companions, to our customers as to the laborers we employ, to our own masters and employers as to our intimate friends (Goffman, 1956, pp48-49).

James is illustrating what Parsons (1951) suggested are the influences of role expectations in the social system of the individual actor. These authors accept humans are influenced by situational and interpersonal factors in the performance of their roles. To emphasise the centrality of this, we need to understand the organisational context that confronts the employee, be they the labourer or the CEO. That is, we need to recognise that role behaviour rarely occurs in isolation. Rather, humans in organisations perform roles more commonly in groups or teams. Thus, the notion of role perceptions takes on a deeper layer of complexity in terms of how others perceive the role and how the role performer carries out their day-to-day tasks. As Goffman argued “... most important of all, we commonly find that the definition of the situation projected by a particular participant is an integral part of a projection that is fostered and sustained by the intimate co-operation of more than one participant” (Goffman, 1956, pp.77-78).

Goffman’s assessment takes on a subtle difference, however, to the Katz and Kahn role model in that Goffman suggested that role behaviour may be an “act” much like that on the big screen and therefore no more than a superficial or pretend performance. This has implications for organisational research therefore, if role is to be deconstructed. What behaviours are actually real and what behaviours are merely acting out a set of expectations at only the most superficial level? We can address this issue by adopting a role analysis that incorporates a triangulation of evidence based on stated and observed behaviours, a point taken up in the methods chapter below.

The implications inherent in the role theories discussed above usually entail an assumption of self-awareness by the role performer. Sargent (1951) cited Guthrie's emphasis on self-awareness in the performance of a role. According to these models, part of the task of performing a role requires the individual to be perceptive of the influences on that role. Guthrie illustrated the influence of self-awareness in role performance "we recognise a description of ourselves, acknowledge our attributes or our membership in a class, and appropriate behaviour follows the thought..."(Guthrie, in Sargent, 1951, p.356). The issue of self-awareness is critical to the formulation of a role-theory framework in organisations. The role model developed by Katz and Kahn recognises the importance of perceptual acuity in the performance of roles. This is not to suggest all people are always conscious of their role performance or how their behaviour is consequential to some signal of expectation. "The student and teacher seldom stop to ponder the kinds of behaviour appropriate to the classroom..."(Sargent, 1951, p.363). Some roles may become automatic and others may actually require careful self-awareness in relation to the behaviour deemed necessary for a particular occasion. Two people negotiating a particularly sensitive political issue may be operating in modes of extreme caution during discussions and thus, in order to maximise their effectiveness, must be extremely conscious of their behaviours. Hughes succinctly illustrates this dichotomy. "In office, personal role and status meet. In some offices, ritual is dominant; in others, judgment and enterprise are called for" (Hughes, 1937, p.405).

4.5 Role-Theory, Systems Theory, and Complexity

This heading comes directly from Katz and Kahn (1978, p.187) as it helps to draw attention to the problematic nature underlying the understanding of the role of Vice-Chancellor. In this context "...role behaviour refers to recurring actions of an individual, appropriately interrelated with the repetitive activities of others so as to yield a predictable outcome" (p.189). Understanding role behaviour then, requires a detailed analysis of the complex interaction of the elements that determine its action. Katz and Kahn argue that such an analysis would require the researcher to "...identify the relevant social system or sub-system and locate the recurring events that fit together in converting some input into an output. This can be done by ascertaining the role expectations of a given set of related offices, since such

expectations are main elements in maintaining the role system and inducing the required role behavior” (1978, p.189). Even this acknowledgement, however, may be overly simplistic in light of recent research on complexity in organisations (Cooksey, 2001).

The above discussion raises concerns then about how the Vice-Chancellor might manage their role in a modern and complex organisation. How do they manage to deal at a cognitive level with the various influences from stakeholder groups, both within the institution, and increasingly, outside the institution (Cooksey & Gates, 1995; Levinson, 1994)?

The definition of ‘system’ is relatively consistent in the literature. According to Emery “system for our discussion is a holistic organisation” (Emery, 1969, p.3). This definition could logically apply to a biological system (such as cellular activity) or an organisational sub-system (such as a dispatch office in a mail centre). Maani and Cavana state that “a system is a collection of parts that interact with one another to function as a whole. However, a system is more than the sum of its parts – it is a product of their interactions” (Maani & Cavana, 2000, p.6).

Open systems theory emerged through the influential work of von Bertalanffy (1950; 1968) initially in the field of biology in the 1920’s. Recently, the Russian scientist Bogdanov’s theory of “Tecktology”, suppressed for 60 years, has emerged as a parallel school of thought to systems theory (Francois, 1999; Gorelik, 1975). Essentially both views expressed a desire to develop systems of thought and analysis that could take into account the possibility (necessity) to measure the system under study as a whole. The notion of incorporating all components of the system in description or analysis is fundamental to modern fields of organisational analysis such as complexity science (Cooksey, 2001) and systems thinking (Senge, 1990).

Bassett and Carr (1996) suggest recent attempts to integrate systems theory approaches, while providing valid insights, appear to deal with organisations at the macro level. They suggest systems theories tend to “focus primarily on the organisation’s relationship with a socio-economic environment” (1996, p.37). The approach to the current research seeks to take a systems perspective but to examine

the socio-psychological perspective originally envisaged by Katz and Kahn to provide deeper levels of insight into the performance of role at senior management levels.

Open systems are designed to maintain an operational status that ensured the working capacity of the system (von Bertalanffy, 1950). This feature of open systems reflects a more dynamic and less predictable environment in many cases. This theory evolved from an epistemological belief in the capacity to measure anything in a normative way. von Bertalanffy and others, however, recognised that traditional methods of measurement or conceptualisation of systems were inadequate as they failed to capture the complexity evident in real life contexts (Boulding, 1956; von Bertalanffy, 1968). Skyttner (1996) summarised the key components of systems theory to include:

Interrelationship and interdependence of objects and their attributes.
Unrelated and independent elements can never constitute a system.

Holism. Holistic properties impossible to detect by analysis should be possible to define a system.

Goal seeking. Systemic interaction must result in some goal or final state to be reached or some equilibrium point being approached.

Transformation process. All systems, if they are to attain their goal, must transform inputs into outputs. In living systems this transformation is mainly of a cyclical nature.

Inputs and outputs. In a closed system the inputs are determined once and for all; in an open system additional inputs are admitted from its environment.

Entropy. This is the amount of disorder or randomness present in any system. All non-living systems tend towards disorder; left alone they will eventually lose all motion and degenerate into an inert mass. When this permanent stage is reached and no events occur, maximum entropy is attained. A living system can, for a finite time, avert this

unalterable process by importing energy from its environment. It is then said to create negentropy, something which is characteristic of all kinds of life.

Regulation. The interrelated objects constituting the system must be regulated in some fashion so that its goals can be realized. Regulation implies the necessary deviations will be detected and corrected. Feedback is therefore a requisite of effective control. Typical of surviving open systems is a stable state of dynamic equilibrium.

Hierarchy. Systems are generally complex wholes made up of smaller subsystems. This nesting of systems within other systems is what is implied by hierarchy.

Differentiation. In complex systems, specialized units perform specialized functions. This is characteristic of all complex systems and may also be called specialization or division of labor.

Equifinality and multifinality. Open systems have equally valid alternative ways of attaining the same objectives (divergence) or, from a given initial state, obtain different, and mutually exclusive, objectives (convergence). (Skyttner, 1996, pp. 20-21)

Thus, systems require both inputs and outputs (this fits the Katz and Kahn role sending and receiving loops), are open and dynamic in nature (as human systems are), have systems within systems (as a typical organisational structure will), and are complex and dynamic in nature (again, characteristic of modern organisation functioning).

An elaboration of von Bertalanffy's general systems theory, Living Systems Theory (Vancouver, 1996) suggests a highly relevant connection with role-theory. Boulding (1956) saw open systems theories as presenting an opportunity to bring together previously fragmented or isolated theoretical perspectives from a range of discipline areas in order to better explain behaviour. Boulding further argues that role is the

penultimate level of complexity in his nine-level hierarchy (1956). His conceptualisation is relevant to the discussion taken up in the next section.

Nevertheless it is convenient for some purposes to distinguish the individual human as a system from the social systems which surround him, and in this sense social organizations may be said to constitute another level of organization. The unit of such systems is not perhaps the person – the individual human as such – but the “role” – that part of the person which is concerned with the organization or situation in question, and it is tempting to define social organizations, or almost any social system, as a set of roles tied together with channels of communication (Boulding, 1956, p.205).

Additionally, the model in Figure (4.1) above does not fully illustrate the complexity of multiple role sending activity such as may be experienced by a senior decision maker in an organisation, although Katz and Kahn acknowledge this aspect of role performance. In understanding Katz and Kahn’s model in context the reader needs to recognise the dynamic complexity of potential role sending sources at the organisational level (including the external environment), the interpersonal level, and the individual attributes level.

Fondas and Stewart argue that researchers need to get close to the role enactment or “moment-to-moment behaviour of their subjects” (Fondas & Stewart, 1994, p.90) due to the complex, and continual adjustment of behaviours in those idiosyncratic “micro-social” (1994, p.90) contexts. The complex, and often subtle, nature of these acts, requires close scrutiny by researchers according to these authors. Thus observational methods would suit this requirement. However, role-sending and enactment also involve cognitive processes, both from the role-sender and the focal person. This requires a more complex array of methods to unpack the ‘meaning’ and the ‘act’ in role behaviour. Characteristics of the focal person, characteristics of the role-sender, organisational influences, characteristics of the relationships between role-sender and focal person, and characteristics of the role set (for example, diversity of group, authority levels, and varying degrees of role-sending strength),

combine to highlight the need for a more sophisticated level of methodological approach to studying role behaviour. This point is reinforced in chapter five.

4.6 Human Resource Management and Role Theory

A particular benefit to developing a deeper level of understanding of Vice-Chancellor roles is that it has implications for human resource management practice in universities. The following discussion highlights a particular function of human resources, job analysis and design, that should benefit from the current research due to the very close relationship between role and job (or position).

The irony of the current limitations in our understanding of leadership roles in higher education is that it is at odds with fundamental principles of modern human resource management practice. According to Robbins et al. (2004) understanding the fundamentals of a particular job (role) is essential in order to develop an effective strategic human resources function. The understanding of the job frequently comes through a sophisticated process of job analysis, often through observation of role performance (Swanson, 1994).

From this platform, human resource professionals can then build an integrated model that enhances job design, staff recruitment and selection, staff appraisal and training and development, and performance related remuneration. Each of these components in the model is related to the others. By not developing a clear understanding of the job, the rest become highly problematic. Selecting applicants against nebulous criteria, failing to adequately train and develop them, or failing to appraise them in relation to clear goals and outcomes mean that employers and employees suffer in the long run due to poor person-job fit.

Job analysis and position descriptions can be quite complex but endeavour to capture the essential tasks and associated skills required of the occupants of these positions (Harvey, 1991; Rodham, 2000; Snell, 1992; Vancouver, 1996). In Australia, as a result of the award restructuring process that commenced in the 1980's, HRM has adopted a quasi role-theory framework to establish industry benchmarks for positions in public sector employer organisations (Macken, 1989). Understanding the dynamic nature of role performance as determined by the analysis of role

expectations (as Katz and Kahn, 1978, argue) is not dissimilar to the task of undertaking a job analysis review as outlined by Swanson (1994).

The separation or overlap of the concepts of role and job has generated some confusion however. Role and job (or position) are not necessarily the same thing according to Katz and Kahn (1978, p.188). Indeed a person may have a position that encompasses multiple roles as Mintzberg has observed (1973). Anderson et al. (1998) take the view "...that the two concepts of position and role are inseparable – there are no positions without roles and no roles without positions – and that they have to be defined in relation to each other" (1998, p.171).

Ilgen and Hollenbeck (1991) argue that jobs are objective, but static, statements of task requirements and the associated skills and experiences required to undertake them. This provides the organisation with measurable dimensions that can be evaluated, compensated, and redesigned if necessary. They criticise the literature, however, for a lack of consistency in defining these constructs. For example they ask "does the definition 'behaviors and activities that are directly associated with achieving a specific objective' (Herbert, 1976, p.316) define a job or a work role? If you guessed job, you were wrong; so were we" (Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991, p.171).

In contrast roles are defined within systems frameworks that recognise the dynamic and socially constructed nature of their performance. They are a "...pattern or set of behaviours..." according to Biddle (1979) that mask subtle complexities in their underlying construction. Typing a letter is rather different to composing one and thus highlights different dimensions of role performance (Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991, p.169). Where tasks can often be defined in normative terms, roles are more prone to qualitative evaluation because of the way people construct meaning about expected role performance (Turner, 1985). Where job analysis is often content driven, role analysis is process driven according to Ilgen and Hollenbeck, but as Katz and Kahn note, ambiguity of role signals make this more complex. As Ilgen and Hollenbeck imply, confusion between the two concepts is not helpful in either an empirical or practical application sense.

One immediate implication for the researcher is to try to determine the best way to capture the complexity of the role. This point is taken up in some detail in the following chapter as a methodological issue. Here, however, the human resource management (HRM) imperative is of critical importance from a number of dimensions. If the role of Vice-Chancellor is changing as a consequence of forces, mostly emanating from outside the institution, as Marginson and Considine (2000) suggest, then HRM practices such as job design, recruitment and selection, training and development, and rewarding and performance managing all need to be better informed. Role analysis can partly but significantly inform these HRM practices. There is virtually no HRM literature on higher senior university management roles in Australia. Thus, decisions influencing appointments of these people may be critically under-informed.

4.7 Strengths and Limitations of the Katz and Kahn Model

The model depicted in Figure (1) acknowledges a variety of influences on role behaviour. Organisational factors such as size, culture, age, and function play a determining role in the behaviours or performance to a degree. The role of a university, for example, carries with it role expectations traditionally associated with inclusiveness and collegiality. Behaviours contrary to the notions of a community of scholars and equals would therefore create tensions and conflict resulting in problems for the Vice-Chancellor should they go unchecked. Interpersonal factors, too, play a part in the carrying out of role behaviours. Trust, communication styles, and the application of various power bases will also influence how roles are carried out. Finally, the individual attributes of the participants in the role-set are also important factors in the equation. Autocratic leadership styles may not be appropriate, for example, in a collegial environment. Similarly, personal values, and attitudes will either reinforce desired behaviours, or in some cases, reward undesirable behaviours should ethical standards not be maintained.

The critical point here is for the researcher to understand the multidimensional effect of these influences on the occupant of the role of interest. Uncovering this mixture of influences is not something easily obtained. The model is complicated further when one considers the influence of outside factors on the performance of the role. Taking the role of Vice-Chancellor as the example, one could query the influence of

environmental (or external) factors such as Government legislation and funding, business requirements of graduate outcomes, and the changing socio-political context of the nation and the regions within which the universities sit. This is an area that is important to the research on the how of Vice-Chancellor roles. A number of authors contend that external influences on the role of Vice-Chancellors are having a negative impact on their relationship with their traditional constituency of academic staff (Coady, 2000; Coaldrake, 2000; Coaldrake & Stedman, 1998; Considine, 1988; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Smyth, 1989; Symes, 1996; Tourish, 2006). These are important issues but the model of role-enactment that Katz and Kahn developed offers little by way of explanatory power in this area. Further, while the model does represent a relatively dynamic system of role-sending and receiving, it is nevertheless still rather linear in its portrayal of complex human interactions. Thus, the model offers a number of areas to examine in organisational settings and in its omissions of extra-organisational factors, an opportunity for the current research to enhance and expand the model's efficacy as a model for organisational behaviour.

4.8 Reconceptualising Organisational Roles – Role Enactment Analysis

Role-enactment is the multi-dimensional relationship between role-sending and receiving, and the performance and feedback from actual role behaviour (Fondas & Stewart, 1994). Fondas and Stewart note that component of this process is both complex and fluid. Performance and feedback, for example, can vary depending on issues such as the degree of ambiguity in the role-sending message. This could be influenced by factors such as the level of trust or understanding that exists between two people based on the time they have had to form an effective working relationship. A new appointee, engaged in role-sending may give and receive very different messages to a seasoned member of staff, who has learned to understand the subtleties of communication in these processes. To highlight the difficulty in portraying an accurate representation of role enactment the managerial role literature raises interesting questions. The managerial role is one area where organisational analysis has integrated role-theory into a conceptual framework (Carlson, 1951; Fondas & Stewart, 1994; Hales, 1986; Hales & Tamangani, 1996; Mintzberg, 1973; Noordegraaf & Stewart, 2000; Stewart, 1989, 1991, 1996). A consistent

philosophical line of inquiry from these researchers revolves around the fundamental question “What do managers really do?” (Noordegraaf & Stewart, 2000, p.428). Mintzberg is frequently quoted by these researchers partly because of his cynicism towards some forms of managerial enquiry such as questionnaire or interview approaches. “If you ask a manager what he (sic) does, he will most likely tell you that he plans, organizes, coordinates, and controls. Then watch what he does. Don’t be surprised if you can’t relate what you see to these four words” (Mintzberg, 1975, p.49). This quote serves two purposes here. First, to illustrate the difficulty in researching the various roles of managers, and secondly, to predicate a key methodological strategy of this thesis in using observational techniques, together with in-depth unstructured interviews, to gather insights into the role of Vice-Chancellors.

The preceding chapter highlights traditional perspectives of university leadership. Various authors attempt to integrate leadership theories to roles and to describe the organisational processes in essentially linear forms. They generally lack integration of the various components in dynamic systems associated with complex modern organisations. These approaches are inadequate in a world dictated by non-linear behaviour and by non-equilibrium in thinking and decision making processes (Cooksey, 2001; Cooksey & Gates, 1995; Priesmeyer, 1992). We need to re-conceptualise the way we look at these organisations and the human interactions within them. University leadership and role-theory would benefit from a non-linear approach, particularly as these areas have not been adequately portrayed in recent times (Bassett & Carr, 1996; Parry, 1998).

The dynamic and often unpredictable organisational environment makes it more difficult to model role activity but we need to start by mapping its context through a detailed role analysis of the players in the leader’s role-set. Thus it is time to conceptualise organisational dynamics/systems/models in terms that reflect the individual and the context (Cooksey & Gates, 1995; Goffman, 1956; Gorelik, 1975; Graen, 1976; Hales & Tamangani, 1996; Mintzberg, 1973; Parry, 2002; Priesmeyer, 1992; Rodham, 2000).

Organisations are far less predictable than we might think. Priesmeyer (1992, p.47) likens organisations to humans in that both have a heartbeat, both achieve a certain distinctive rhythm, yet each is non-linear all the same. Both require air, food, people, money, they need to change and adapt; they age, wither, die, grow, reproduce, and pass on generational information (organisational DNA).

Thus a pictorial representation of the organisation or the role-set may be dramatically different from that proposed by Katz and Kahn (1978) among others who adopt a linear, static depiction of these entities. As Brunswik (1952) states, these models represent investigation reflecting parsimony at the expense of complexity. This of course enters into the debate between nomothetic and idiographic approaches to analysing behavioural phenomena. Brunswik (1952) and Cooksey (2001) among others have suggested the idea of aggregating findings regarding human behaviour in organisations (through nomothetic research methods) limits our view and therefore explains little of practical value at the level of the individual. Priesmeyer (1992) also argues for a more complex analysis of organisational behaviour by highlighting the need for integration. As he suggests, studying a symphony note by note, by itself, tells us very little until we hear the entire symphony in harmony (1992, p.3). This makes a lot of sense and reminds us of the blind men attempting to describe an elephant, each only touching a single part of the animal. The descriptions by themselves are accurate but in terms of describing reality fall well short.

Traditional scientific methods operate under the premise that they cannot describe or measure everything in the particular event under investigation, but tolerate a certain level of measurement or statistical error. The error term in an ANOVA, for example, does this. Thus, traditional nomothetic research assumptions and the statistical tools used to measure them exclude certain facets of the phenomena (extraneous variables, for example) from the study. In addition, some data may be excluded from the analysis if it is deemed by the researcher that these data represent statistical outliers that may have a particularly adverse effect on the means and standard deviations (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001). These statistical outliers may have a significant relationship with the phenomena being observed. But, due to the parsimonious philosophy of the nomothetic tradition they are ignored or argued

away. We therefore are confronted with models such as Figure 4.2 (below) which at first glance may seem to be a relatively complex role model. Note however, there is little evidence of more complex feedback loops in this model. Whilst feedback loops are presented they maintain a linear perspective suggesting behaviour follows a predictable pathway, a belief that is taken exception to by Argyris (1977), Cooksey (2001), and Senge (1990). According to Galbraith “the presence of multiple loops sharing some variables in common and containing a variety of delays, is the source of complexity that makes social systems so difficult to predict and control” (1999, p.143).

Other researchers (Getzels, Lipham, & Campbell, 1968) attempted to integrate nomothetic and idiographic dimensions to their model of social behaviour. They recognised the interaction between individual and institutional factors albeit in a relatively simplistic and linear perspective as illustrated in Figure 4.2 (below).

From this model the authors claim a degree of predictability in role behaviour. Thus, the equation $B = f(R \times P)$ where “...B is observed behaviour, R is a given institutional role defined by the expectations attaching to it, and P is the personality of the particular role incumbent defined by his (sic) need-dispositions” (Getzels et al., 1968, p.80).

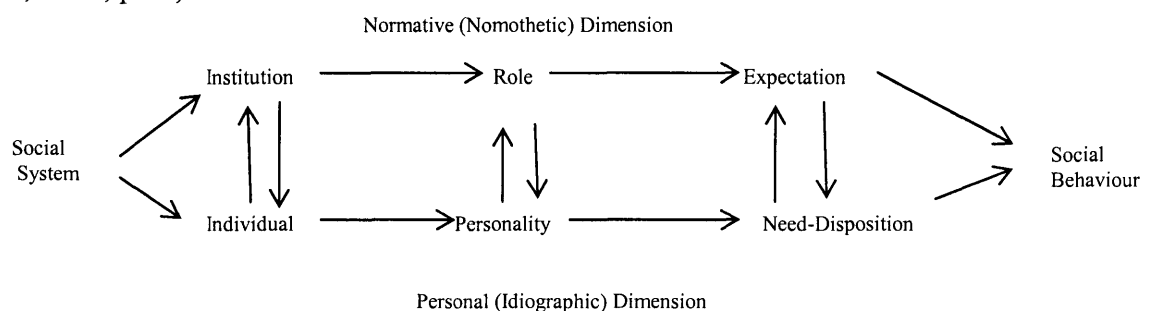


Figure 4.2. The normative and personal dimensions of social behaviour (Getzels et al. 1968, p.80.)

As Cooksey and Gates (1995) suggest, however, behaviour is not a simple phenomenon and is often highly unpredictable. Katz and Kahn (1978) note the difficulty in assuming that role expectations have been accurately conveyed or interpreted in any given role episode thus giving rise to the possibility of role ambiguity. In addition, the relationship between the institution and the individual

may be complex and at times chaotic, particularly if the individual suffers from any psychological problems or role stress. Thus the directionality of the arrows in the model outlined above represents a best case scenario where all factors are known and therefore predictable.

Levinson (1994) notes that human factors, even if known, are often ignored in organisational functioning to the detriment of organisational success. For example, the CEOs of many companies may lack the conceptual capacity to deal with the complexity of chaotic business environments or to deal with complex and numerous amounts of information. Decision making “blind spots” may also occur due to the incidence of organisational narcissism within the executive or by the CEO due to the masculine and competitive environment within which they work, according to Levinson.

To further complicate the interaction in the role episode, Epstein (1994) suggests humans respond with different cognitive reactions depending on the level of crisis they perceive to be operating under. According to Epstein (1994), our rational cognitive system operates in a planned, ordered, and logical way in role behaviour. However, when a person is subjected to excessive stress or conflict, their biological and psychological hard-wiring takes over and rationality is overridden by this experiential response. Thus any model which claims to adequately capture the role behaviours of a social process such as leadership is prone to underestimating the level of complexity. Bassett and Carr (1996, p.38) further argue that traditional organisational structure and role specialisation models offer crude typologies as they do not go beyond structure and surface level investigation and analysis. As an alternative they argue “role analysis, rooted in psychology of individual differences and social psychology may offer a significant opportunity for redirection and enrichment of organization theory” (Bassett & Carr, 1996, p.37). In terms of adding a new dimension to the study of role behaviour they have a good point, but in terms of systems approaches (Capra, 1997) they are merely adding another component to the role-theory map.

4.9 How Role Enactment Analysis Informs The Research.

From the above discussion the following points, relevant to the current research, are noted:

- Role enactment of Vice-Chancellors occurs in a broader system of interdependent role influences that has not been adequately assessed, except from leadership perspectives;
- Role enactment is multi-directional in influence as well as multi-directionally influenced;
- Role enactment needs to be examined from a complex systems perspective;
- Role enactment of Vice-Chancellors needs to acknowledge external organisational influences in addition to influences outlined by the Katz and Kahn model;
- Role enactment analysis requires multiple method approaches to gain a more sophisticated appreciation of the multi-dimensional nature of modern organisational roles;
- Role enactment is negotiated according to Graen (1976, p.1206) whereby participants may not necessarily accept role signals from senders as the Katz and Kahn model suggests.

The above discussion illustrates that role performance is influenced by a range of personal, interpersonal, organisational and extra-organisational factors. Studying role-enactment requires an approach that provides the researcher with an opportunity to explore these factors in natural settings to seek to confirm or deny the extent of their influence on the performance of the focal person.

In broad terms then the following questions must receive attention.

- To what extent do personal characteristics influence the enactment of Vice-Chancellor roles?

- To what extent do interpersonal characteristics influence the enactment of Vice-Chancellor roles?
- To what extent do organisational (contextual) factors influence the enactment of Vice-Chancellor roles?
- To what extent do extra-organisational (for example, government policy) factors influence the enactment of Vice-Chancellor roles?
- To what extent do VC's role behaviours/patterns of role enactment have reciprocal influences on aspects of university systems?

These points and key role influence questions form the basis for the investigation of the role of Vice-Chancellor in Australian universities from an exploratory perspective. The following chapter outlines the methodology adopted to meet the multi-dimensional demands of studying role in specific organisational contexts.