Academic Leadership Development (ALD) Program at College of Medicine, Jeddah; King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences

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Abstract

Introduction: The new Medical College in Jeddah (COM-J) - a branch of King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences - is currently confronting many challenges, accelerating the need for effective academic leaders. Unfortunately, little is known about how the competency of academic leaders underpins effective performance or how leaders might be aided in acquiring competency. This environment has driven authorities at COM-J to be proactive in the establishment of the Academic Leadership Development (ALD) program for current and potential future academic leaders.

Objectives: To assess the perception of academic leaders on the importance of capability, different approaches and criterion for judging effective performance.

Methodology: A cross-sectional online survey was conducted with 47 academic leaders at COM-J. In addition to demographic data, information on academic leaders' perception of the importance of three datasets (capabilities, approaches and judging criteria) was collected using a five-point Likert scale (1 - low to 5 - high). The project team and experts in the field of leadership development assessed the face validity of the survey instrument. The reliability of the survey instrument was calculated; Cronbach's coefficient alpha was 0.97 (a high value).

Program Model: In response to the need mentioned in the introduction, we have adopted a model of academic leadership development that has already been tested in several large-scale studies of effective leadership in higher education.

This model suggests an ongoing process with 4 stages; Diagnosis, Development, Implementation and Evaluation. Areas of good practice are retained, and those requiring further attention and new gaps for development are re-addressed.

Results: The response rate was 100% (47), and the academic leaders perceived that a combination of emotional intelligence (both personal and interpersonal), cognitive capabilities and a set of relevant skills and knowledge are necessary for effective performance as an academic leader at COM-J.

Conclusion: We produced a model for an ALD program at COM-J with the following attributes:

• A set of capabilities and competencies for effective leadership at COM-J.
• A set of quality checkpoints (criterion for judging effective performance) at COM-J.
• An online tool to enable future leaders to complete the same survey and compare their responses.

Key words: Education, leadership

Introduction

Leadership development can be described as the "longitudinal process of expanding the capacities of individuals, groups, and organizations to increase their effectiveness in leadership roles and processes" (1).

Academic leadership is critical in higher education because it influences the quality of student learning (2). In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Higher Education and leading Saudi universities have recognized that leadership plays a significant role in the success, effectiveness and quality of higher education. Thus, the Ministry established the Academic Leadership Center (ALC) in 2009 to give focus and emphasis to this critical issue. Based on an initial plan, the ALC organized numerous developmental activities to serve some of the needs of Saudi higher education institutions and administrators. These activities included successful workshops for rectors, vice rectors, academic deans and department chairs (3).

The new Medical College in Jeddah (COM-J) - a branch of King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences - is confronting many challenges, which accelerates the need for effective academic leaders. Unfortunately, little is known about how the competency of academic leaders underpins effective performance or how leaders might be aided in acquiring competency. This environment has driven authorities at COM-J to be proactive in the establishment of the Academic Leadership Development (ALD) program for current and potential future academic leaders.

Middlehurst et al (4) question is there a difference between leadership in higher education and other organizations; they believe that there is no difference (4).

Bryman (5) reviewed literature to determine effective leadership styles in HE and found that as there is no consistency in the literature in using key terms it was difficult to form a cumulative view (Bryman, 2009).

Although leadership is widely distributed across universities, it is often subject to 'a somewhat individualistic and management approach' (6).

The literature shows that very limited professional development has been provided for academic leaders. For example, only three percent of over 2000 academic leaders surveyed in the United States' national studies from 1990 to 2000 had leadership development programs at their universities (7).

However, in some developed countries, attempts have been made to provide support for the academic leaders. For example, in the United States, the American Council on Education has been offering a series of general national workshops for more than 40 years. In England, the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education was founded in 2004 by the UK government to provide support and advice on leadership and management for all UK University and higher education colleges. In Australia, in 2007, the federal government funded the LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management to meet the need for high quality leadership in higher education (8).

In higher education, a competency-based approach is an effective tool for leadership development (9). Scott et al. (10) proposed a model for academic leadership development (increasing a leader's capability) that is shown in Figure 1. This model suggests that professional learning for academic leaders will follow an action learning cycle that involves an ongoing process to identify the "gaps" in one's capabilities using the leadership scales and dimensions and then addresses these gaps using a mixture of self-managed learning, practice-based learning, and appropriately timed and linked formal leadership development. As this process unfolds, the results can be monitored using effectiveness indicators, and the quality of what has emerged can be evaluated. Areas of good practice are retained, and those requiring further attention and new "gaps" for development are re-addressed. In this

Figure 1: Model of Academic Leadership Development
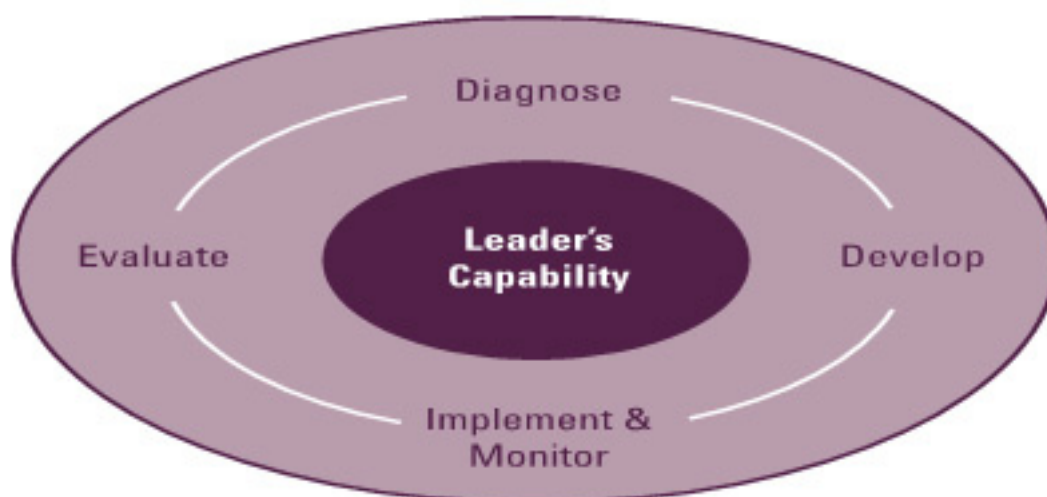
manner, the cycle continues. It is critical to view the process not only as cyclical but also as heading somewhere significant based on the validated capability and focus scales that are identified in the current study.

In response to the above-stated needs, we adopted this model, which has already been tested in several large-scale studies of effective leadership in higher education led by Geoff Scott, Hamish Coates and Michelle Anderson (10)(13). However, as Bryman (5) reported that any leadership framework that ignores context is ineffective, a competency model created in one context cannot be assumed to be generalizable to other contexts. It was therefore important to contextualize this model for COM-J.

Methodology

This project proposal began in April 2013 and the needs assessment part of it, began in August 2013 and the main fieldwork was concluded in November 2014.

A range of background reviews were conducted - reviews of research literature and policy reports, and of operating environments to provide a vital contextual dimension to the project. The survey instrument was adopted from a prior study of higher education leaders led by Geoff Scott, Hamish Coates and Michelle Anderson (10)(13). Initially, insights from the background reviews were used to refine the instrument. The instrument was further revised and enhanced, and then deployed in a data collection.

2.1 Study Setting:
The study was performed at the College of Medicine in the King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. These classes were located within King Abdulaziz Medical City, National Guard Health Affairs. Classes began in the academic year (2010/2011 - 1431/1432) and adopted problem-based learning curriculum. Currently, there are 143 students and 128 (joint 106 & 22 full-time) faculty staff.

2.2 Study Population:
This study limited its definition of leaders to people in academic roles, representing people who are positioned as formal leaders at COM-J. A total of 47 academic leaders - the entire population - were included: one dean, three associate deans, five chairmen, thirty block coordinators and co-coordinators, and eight college council members.

2. 3 Study Design:
In this cross-sectional study, an online survey was conducted for 47 academic leaders focusing on the following:

1. Part 1: Academic leaders' relevant demographic data
2. Part 2: Academic leaders' perception of the relative importance of sets of leadership capabilities to identify priority areas:

• Personal capabilities
• Interpersonal capabilities
• Cognitive capabilities
• Leadership competencies 3.

Part 3: Academic leaders' perception of the relative effectiveness of different approaches to developing these capabilities

4. Part 4: Academic leaders' perception of indicators that can be used to evaluate their effectiveness

The respondents quantitatively rated the importance of items using a five-point Likert scale (1 - low to 5 - high). The target leaders were invited by email to participate in the survey and were given an explanation of the survey's purpose and significance. Follow- up emails were sent at weekly intervals, and the researcher undertook personal follow-up when necessary. The survey was field-tested before distribution and was designed for online completion in approximately 20 minutes using a Qualtrics online survey. The responses were confidential and were not linked to information on the sampling frame. The data collection was completed by early November 2013.

2.4 Data Management and Analysis
The data analysis addressed each of the study's objectives and included a summary of the means and ordinal ranks across the academic roles.

2.5 Validation & reliability
This model has already been validated in large-scale studies, as previously noted. The project team and one expert assessed the validity of the instrument. The reliability of the survey instrument was calculated: Cronbach's coefficient alpha was 0.97 (a high value) for all questions, and each individual question varied from 0.8 to 0.93.

2.6 Ethical Considerations:
The nature of this project highlights many ethical issues, these are:
1) Get an official approval from the Master Program of medical education; Department of Medical education ; college of medicine ; king Saudi bin Abdulaziz University for health science (KSAU - HS)
2) Get Approval from COM-J authority to conduct this project.
3) Confidentiality - Because academic leaders may be sharing very personal information. Participants should not normally be named (unless their permission has been explicitly sought, and this should only be done where a name is essential for the pursuit of the research in question).
4) Informed consent - part of the online survey. This usually required that respondents agreeing to participate, after being informed of potential risks and benefits.
5) Promises and reciprocity - The issue here is what the participants get in return for sharing their time and insights.

Results

The main results will be divided into three parts including the leader's capability model, approaches for academic leadership development at COM-J, and criterion for judging effective performance.

3.1 Leader's Capability Model
Leaders' capability consists of five domains as seen in Figure 2. Each domain was given operational definitions by an inventory of 56 items. Furthermore, these items were clustered into 11 different scales.

3.1.1 Domain 1: Personal Capability
Academic leaders particularly emphasized the importance of the following: understanding personal strengths and limitations; being true to one's personal values and ethics; having energy, passion and enthusiasm for learning and teaching; wanting to achieve the best outcome possible; and remaining calm under pressure or when things take an unexpected turn. Less emphasis was given to facets of effective leadership that involved tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty.

Figure 2: Academic Leadership Capability Domains
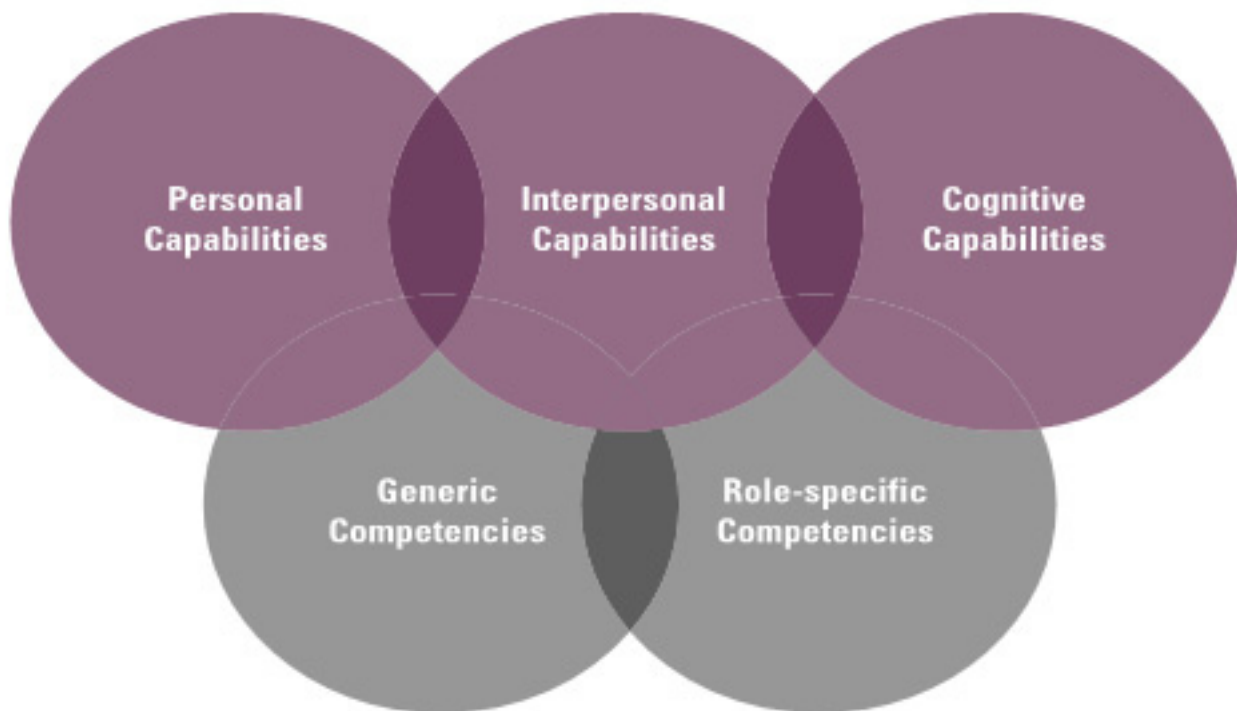
3.1.2 Domain 2: Inter-Personal Capability
Table 1 reports the importance ratings for the interpersonal capabilities items. All are rated highly

Table 1: Interpersonal capabilities of all academic leaders at College of Medicine, Jeddah

Rank	Interpersonal Capabilities	Average Value
1	Working constructively and being honest in dealing with other	4.72
2	Motivating others to achieve positive outcomes	4.70
3	Listening to different points of view before reaching a decision	4.66
4	Emphasizing and working productively with staff and other people from a wide range of backgrounds	4.62
5	Developing and contributing positively to learning-based programs	4.50
6	Giving and receiving constructive feedback to/ from work colleagues and others	4.49
7	Emphasizing and working productively with students from a wide range of backgrounds	4.40
8	Developing and using networks of colleagues to solve key workplace problems	4.40
9	Understanding how different groups that make up my university operate and influence different situations	4.34
10	Influencing people's behavior and decisions in effective ways	4.34
11	Working with very senior people within and beyond my university without being intimidated	4.17

3.1.3 Domain 3: Cognitive capabilities

All items used to measure the cognitive dimension of leadership capability were rated highly by the COM-J leaders Table 2.

Table 2: Cognitive Capabilities of all Academic Leaders at College of Medicine, Jeddah

Rank	Cognitive Capabilities	Average Value
1	Having a clear, justified and achievable direction in my area of responsibility	4.63
2	Using previous experience to figure out what is occurring when a current situation takes an unexpected turn	4.60
3	Making sense of and learning from experience	4.59
4	Diagnosing the underlying causes of a problem and taking appropriate action to address it	4.59
5	Setting and justifying priorities for my daily work	4.57
6	Thinking creatively and laterally	4.48
7	Adjusting a plan of action in response to problems that are identified during its implementation	4.44
8	Recognizing patterns in a complex situation	4.28
9	Seeing and then acting on an opportunity for a new direction	4.28
10	Identifying from a mass of information the core issue or opportunity in any situation	4.26
11	Seeing the best way to respond to a perplexing situation	4.24
12	Tracing out and assessing the likely consequences of alternative courses of action	4.22
13	Knowing that there is never a fixed set of steps for solving workplace problems	4.07
14	Recognizing how seemingly unconnected activities are linked	3.96

3.1.4 Domains 4 and 5: Leadership competencies

All leadership competencies are ranked highly (mean above 4) with the exception of competency associated with understanding of industrial relations and processes as they apply to higher education. The highest levels of importance were attached to the following: Being able to organize work and manage time effectively; the ability to chair meetings effectively; being able to make effective presentations for a range of different groups; the comprehension for how to develop an effective higher education learning program; and being able to help staff learn how to deliver necessary changes effectively.

3.1.5 All the Domain Scales

The academic leaders perceived that all the domains of the leader's capability model were important for effective leadership at COM-J. The average scores of the scales within the main domains are reported in Figure 3 - opposite page.

3.2 Approaches for academic leadership development at COM-J.

The 47 academic leaders were asked to rate the effectiveness of each of the learning approaches in assisting their development as an academic leader (1 [low] to 5 [high]).

In general, the leaders at COM-J expressed a preference for attending learning and teaching conferences, participating in higher education leadership seminars, learning 'on-the-job', and participating in leadership development programs that are tailored to their needs more than completing formal leadership programs given by external providers or even by the university.

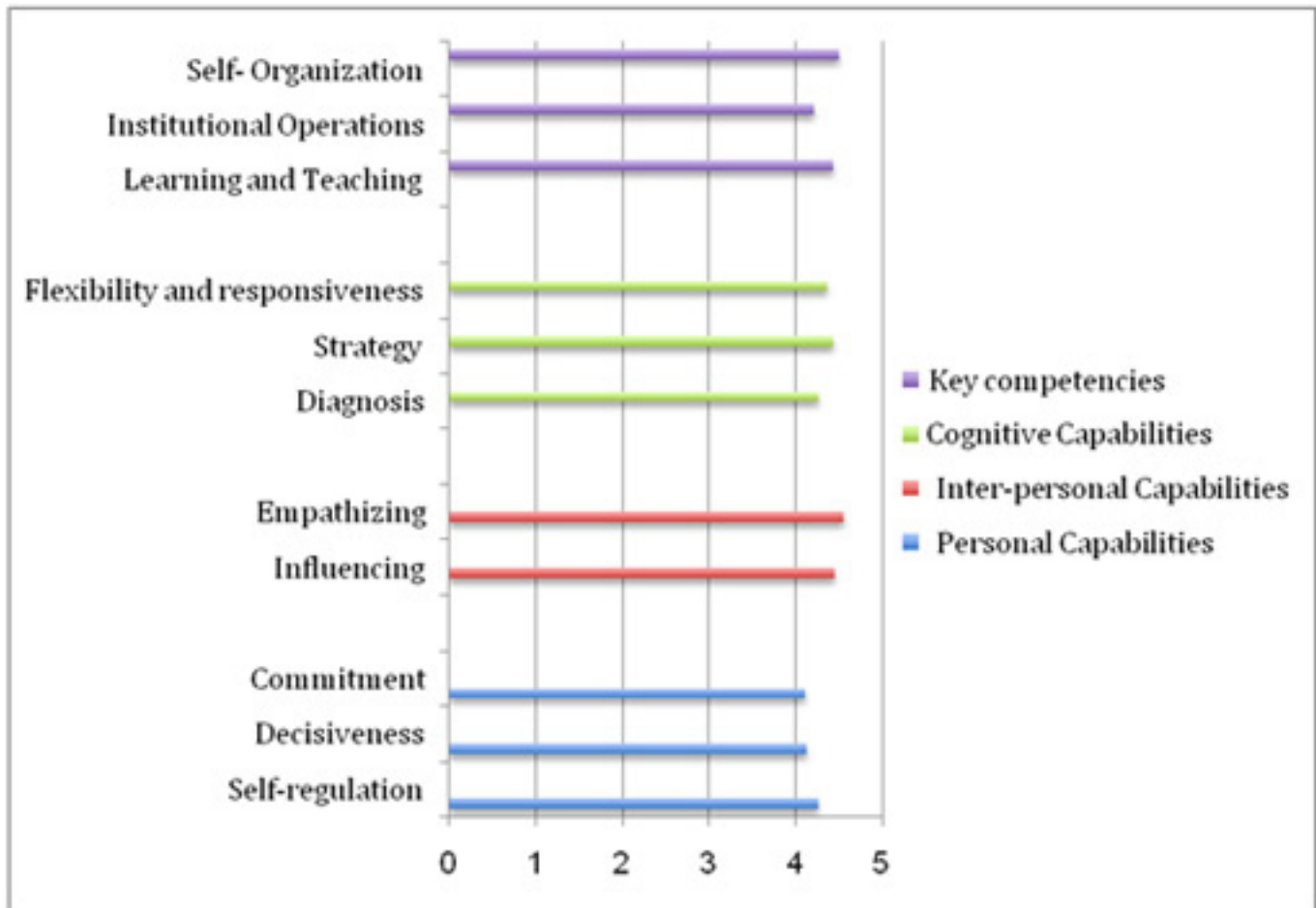**Figure 3: Leadership Capability Importance (average scale score)**

Table 3: Indicators of Leadership Effective Performance by role (items ranks)
Only the first 5 ranks are reported here out of 26 indicators.

Item	Criterion for judging effective performance	Dean Associate Deans	Chairmen	Block Coordinators & Co-coordinators	College Council Members	All Leaders
1	Producing significant improvements in learning and teaching quality	7	3	1	2	1
2	Delivering successful team projects in learning teaching	16	14	2	5	2
3	Producing future learning and teaching leaders	5	7	4	7	3
4	Receiving positive user feedback for your area of responsibility	8	2	7	1	4
5	Producing successful learning systems or infrastructure	10	12	5	8	5

In this study, respondents were asked to rate the importance of each indicator as a criterion for judging effectiveness in their role. There were 26 indicators ranked by leader roles. The results of the survey of the whole group (all academic leaders)

1) Personal Capability of all academic leaders at COM-J

Rank	Personal Capabilities Academic Leaders	Average Value
1	Understanding my personal strengths and limitations	4.72
2	Being true to one's personal values and ethics	4.70
3	Having energy, passion and enthusiasm for learning and teaching	4.51
4	Wanting to achieve the best outcome possible	4.51
5	Remaining calm under pressure or when things take an unexpected turn	4.50
6	Admitting to and learning from my errors	4.40
7	Being willing to take a hard decision	4.36
8	Maintaining a good work/ life balance and keeping things in perspective	4.35
9	Taking responsibility for program activities and outcomes	4.34
10	Deferring judgment and not jumping in too quickly to resolve a problem	4.15
11	Being confident to take calculated risks	4.04
12	Persevering when things are not working out as anticipated	3.69
13	Bouncing back from adversity	3.68
14	Pitching in and undertaking menial tasks when needed	3.39
15	Tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty	3.33

2) Inter-personal Capabilities of all academic leaders at COM-J

Rank	Inter-personal Capabilities Academic Leaders	Average Value
1	Working constructively and honest in dealing with others	4.72
2	Motivating others to achieve positive outcomes	4.70
3	Listening to different point of view before coming to a decision	4.66
4	Emphasizing and working productively with staff and other players from a wide range of backgrounds	4.62
5	Developing and contributing positively to learn-based programs	4.50
6	Giving and receiving constructive feedback to/ from work colleagues and others.	4.49
7	Emphasizing and working productively with students from a wide range of backgrounds	4.40
8	Developing and using networks of colleagues to solve key workplace problems	4.40
9	Understanding how the different groups that make up my university operate and influence different situations	4.34
10	Influencing people's behavior and decisions in effective ways	4.34
11	Working with very senior people within and beyond my university without being intimidated	4.17

3) Cognitive Capabilities of all academic leaders at COM-J

Rank	Cognitive Capabilities Academic Leaders	Average value
1	Having a clear, justified and achievable direction in my area of responsibility	4.63
2	Using previous experience to figure out what's going on when a current situation takes an unexpected turn	4.60
3	Making sense of and learning from experience	4.59
4	Diagnosing the underlying causes of a problem and taking appropriate action to address it	4.59
5	Setting and justifying priorities for my daily work	4.57
6	Thinking creatively and laterally	4.48
7	Adjusting a plan of action in response to problems that are identified during its implementation	4.44
8	Recognizing patterns in a complex situation	4.28
9	Seeing and then acting on an opportunity for a new direction	4.28
10	Identifying from a mass of information the core issue or opportunity in any situation	4.26
11	Seeing the best way to respond to a perplexing situation	4.24
12	Tracing out and assessing the likely consequences of alternative courses of action	4.22
13	Knowing that there is never a fixed set of steps for solving workplace problems	4.07
14	Recognizing how seemingly unconnected activities are linked	3.96

4) Skills and Knowledge of all academic leaders at COM-J

Rank	Skills And Knowledge Academic Leaders	Average value
1	Being able to organize my work and manage time effectively	4.70
2	An ability to chair meetings effectively	4.65
3	Being able to make effective presentations to a range of different groups	4.65
4	Understanding how to develop an effective higher education learning program	4.52
5	Being able to help my staff learn how to deliver necessary changes effectively	4.41
6	Having sound administrative and resource management skills	4.40
7	Knowing how to identify and disseminate good learning and management practice across the unit or university	4.39
8	Being able to use IT effectively to communicate and perform key work functions	4.39
9	Being able to manage my own ongoing professional learning and development	4.39
10	Understanding how to implement successfully a new higher education program	4.37
11	Being on top of current developments in learning and teaching	4.37
12	Having a high level of up-to-date knowledge of what engages university students in productive learning	4.33
13	Understanding how to design and conduct an evaluation of a higher education learning program	4.28
14	Understanding how universities operate	4.23
15	Understanding the role of risk management and litigation in my work	4.13
16	Understanding of industrial relations and processes as they apply to higher education	3.72

5) Support for Leadership (all academic leaders at COM-J)

Rank	Support For Your Leadership Development Academic Leaders	Average value
1	Attending learning and teaching conferences	4.20
2	Participating in higher education leadership seminars	4.17
3	Learning 'on-the-job'	4.13
4	Participating in leadership development programs which are custom-tailored to your needs	4.11
5	Study of 'real-life' workplace problems	4.04
6	Being involved in formal mentoring/ coaching programs	4.04
7	Completing formal leadership programs given by external providers	4.04
8	Participating in 360 degree feedback reviews based in known leadership capabilities	4.00
9	Completing formal leadership programs provided by your university	3.96
10	Undertaking site visits to other institutions or agencies	3.93
11	Ad hoc conversation about work with people in similar roles	3.91
12	Participating in peer networks within the university	3.89
13	Accessing leadership information on the Internet	3.89
14	Being involved in informal mentoring/ coaching	3.87
15	Participating in annual performance reviews	3.78
16	Undertaking self-guided reading on leadership	3.78
17	Undertaking work-placement or exchanges	3.63
18	Participating in peer networks beyond the university	3.61
19	Involvement in professional leadership groups or associations	3.59
20	Completing a tertiary qualification relevant to leadership	3.50

6) Criterion for judging effective performance of academic leaders

Rank	Criterion for judging effective performance Academic Leaders	Average value
1	Producing significant improvements in learning and teaching quality	4.61
2	Delivering successful team projects in learning teaching	4.52
3	Producing future learning and teaching leaders	4.52
4	Receiving positive user feedback for your area of responsibility	4.51
5	Producing successful learning systems or infrastructure	4.48
6	Achieving goals set for your own professional development	4.48
7	Improving student satisfaction ratings for learning and teaching	4.46
8	Achieving a high profile for your area of responsibility	4.43
9	Establishing a collegial working environment	4.41
10	Delivering Agreed tasks or project on time and specification	4.39
11	Bringing Innovative policies and practices into action	4.39
12	Meeting student load targets	4.22
13	Achieving positive outcomes from external reviews of the area	4.20
14	Successful implementation of new initiatives	4.18
15	Having a high level of staff support	4.17
16	Promoting your team Achievements	4.05
17	Enhanced representation of equity groups	4.02
18	Winning resources for your area of responsibility	4.00
19	Publishing refereed papers and reports on learning and teaching	3.91
20	Increased student retention rate	3.91
21	Formative involvement of external stakeholders in your work	3.80
22	Being invited to present to key groups on learning and teaching	3.80
23	Winning learning and teaching awards and prizes	3.78
24	Securing competitive funds related to learning and teaching	3.65
25	Achieving a positive financial outcome for your area of responsibility	3.63
26	Achieving a positive financial outcome	3.41

Discussion

Establishing a competency-based model for the ALD program at COM-J will follow Kern's six-step approach: problem identification, general needs assessment, targeted needs assessment, goals and objectives, program strategies, implementation and evaluation. This study constitutes the general needs assessment step of the project.

The model adopted in this program has been validated in large-scale studies not only in Australia but also in Canada, the United Kingdom and South Africa, where international review workshops were conducted. The face validity and reliability were assessed and calculated, and high levels were found.

Leaders must be able to manage their own emotional reactions, and this ability reflects their personal capability. It is also important to have a high level of interpersonal capability to better understand what is occurring and to determine what might work best to resolve the situation.

Both personal and interpersonal capabilities have been extensively researched during the past decade by researchers such as Goleman (11) and are often referred to as a leader's "emotional intelligence." The results of this study showed a strong perception of the importance of different capabilities for effective performance for all academic leaders at COM-J. This outcome provides an important form of contextualization of the model for COM-J.

Effective leadership does not merely involve capability. Leading organizations such as COM-J also require both generic and specific knowledge and skills - the bottom circles in Figure 2. These areas of competency provide support for diagnosing different situations and are also a source for shaping and delivering the appropriate response. Therefore, all five domains must function in an integrated and productive manner over time. Thus, a

weakness in one area affects the operation of other areas. The contribution of this study is to help academic leaders to develop skills that are important for the effectiveness of academic leadership. Evidence from the 47 leaders who participated in this study affirms that effective leadership involves both individual talent and a situated capacity for implementation. Clearly, professional learning is not essential for leadership - many leaders have little formal training in leadership prior to assuming their roles, although they perform well. However, leadership training is a helpful and undoubtedly valuable means of ensuring high-quality leadership.

Unless academic leadership development programs are implemented properly with the appropriate approaches, they will fail. Therefore, to ensure that our ALD program will utilize the appropriate approaches for implementation, the 47 academic leaders completing the online survey were asked to rate the effectiveness of each of the learning approaches in assisting their development as an academic leader. If we compare the results of this study with those of Scott (10) and Coates (12). The table below shows that learning on the job and the study of real-life workplace problems were within the first five rankings in all the studies.

Although ad hoc conversations about work with people in similar roles, participation in peer networks within the university and involvement in informal mentoring/coaching were not within the first five ranks of preferred approaches at COM-J, the results still indicate the need for this program, as the environment is currently not supporting such approaches.

Establishing a competency-based model for the ALD program at COM-J will follow Kern's six-step approach: problem identification, general needs assessment, targeted needs assessment, goals and objectives, program strategies, implementation and evaluation. This study constitutes the general needs assessment step of the project.

Ranks	Scott et al. (2008)	The Current Study	Coates et al., (2010)
Learning on the job	1st	3rd	1st
Ad hoc conversations about work with people in similar roles	2nd	11th	3rd
Participating in peer networks within the university	3rd	18th	6th
Being involved in informal mentoring/coaching	4th	14th	5th
Study of real-life workplace problems	5th	5th	2nd

Limitations of the study

1. We limited the definition of academic roles to those who are positioned as formal leaders, but there are likely to be others who are engaged in informal leadership positions. Although this definition is behind the scope of this study, there would be value in further work to review the nature and effects of informal leadership at COM-J.

2. This study for the contextualization of the model to COM-J employed a quantitative approach; thus, qualitative studies are needed.

Conclusion

The study conducted within this project indicates that effective performance as an academic leader at COM-J, requires the combination of emotional intelligence (both personal and interpersonal), cognitive capabilities and a particular set of relevant skills and knowledge. This result serves to confirm the conceptual model summarized in Figure 2. The results are also consistent with those of parallel studies that have used the same framework (10).

Recommendations

1. The ALD program should be aligned with the findings of this study with regard to what and how academic leaders prefer to learn.

2. Further qualitative studies using semi-structured interview or focus groups for the same population with Scott, Coates and Anderson's (10) conceptual model for higher education leadership capability as a guide are required to improve our understanding and to gain a rich picture of leadership at COM-J.

3. The final capability/competency model resulting from further qualitative studies can be integrated with other human resource practices to create the following:

i.   Hiring guidelines
ii.   Job descriptions
iii.   Promotion criteria
iv.   Performance appraisal

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