FSTE & HKCAAVQ Conference on

Enhancing Student Learning Experience

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Session 1: Teaching and Learning (1)

Leader Development in Hong Kong Higher Education Institutions: Lived Experiences of Departmental Leaders

Forrest Cheuk Tung CHAN, EdD

Caritas Institute of Community Education

Agenda

▶ Problem of Practice

  ▶ Impact of departmental leadership on student learning experience

  ▶ Challenges confronting departmental leaders

  ▶ How these were tackled through leader development

▶ Methodology

▶ Findings

▶ Conclusions and Implications for HEIs' Practice

▶ Q & A

Problem of Practice

Good Student Learning Experience Depends on Organizational Efforts

(Chin, 2007; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Pounder, 2011; Siddique, Aslam, Khan, & Fatima, 2011
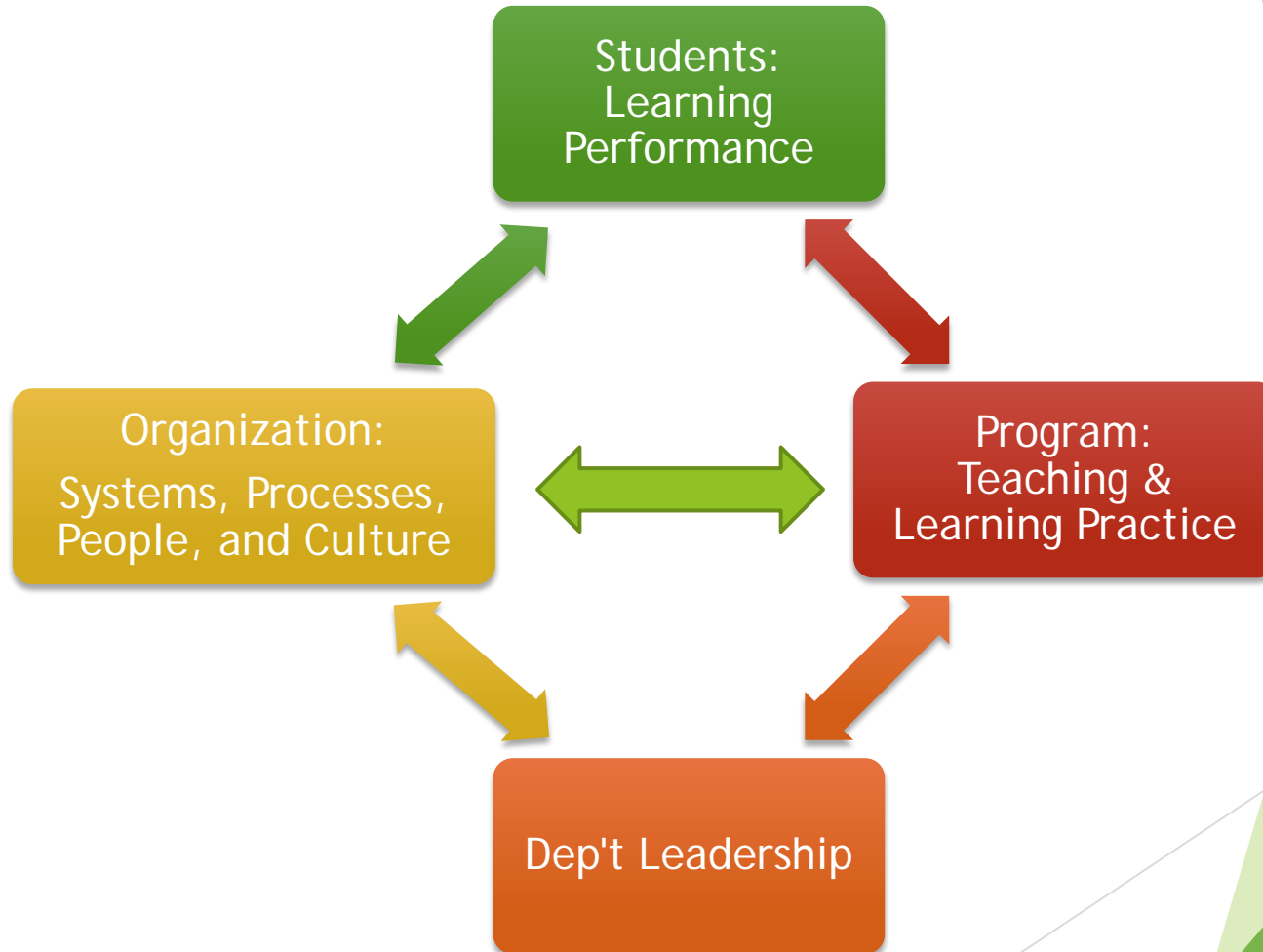
Challenges Confronting Dep't Leaders

▶ increasingly complex job demands to do more, better, and with less resources (Bryman, 2007; Mok & Cheung, 2011)

▶ multiple roles and duties to satisfy multiple stakeholders (Sirkis, 2011; Spiller, 2010)

▶ unprepared (Avolio et al., 2009; Braun et al., 2009)

▶ tendency towards fire-fighting (Vilkinas & Ladyshewsky, 2012)

Lower level of satisfaction with institutional leadership in HK Universities (Coates, Dobson, Goedegebuure, & Meek, 2010)

Effective Leadership Begins with Leader Development

" *Those who are truly committed to becoming a leader understand what it takes to* learn about themselves, *they honestly recognize their strengthens and limitations, they solicit and integrate* feedback, *they stay* open to new experiences, *they* seek diverse information, *they hear and* value their own voices. *Those who do so are the ones among us who will master* the art of leader-as-lifelong-learner."

(Warren Bennis and Joan Goldsmith, 2010, p 5-6)

"leadership development is high on the agendas of policy-makers and senior managers in higher education institutions"
(Burgoyne, Mackness, & Williams, 2009, p.2)

Research Purpose

▶ To explore how eight departmental leaders in Hong Kong's higher education institutions make sense of their experiences of development as leaders over time through an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach.

▶ Leader development: focuses on developing the human capital (knowledge, skills, and abilities) of individual leaders

▶ Leadership development: focuses on enhancing the social capital (leadership capacity of multiple individuals) of an organization.

Methodology

▶ Approach: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 1995)

  ▶ *Focus on essence: Features of individuals' meaning made to lived experience*

  ▶ *Double hermeneutics*: researcher actively interprets participants' interpretation of their life experience from an "insider perspective"

  ▶ *Ideography*: rich description of *what* and *how* of individuals' experience

▶ Research Design: Qualitative study

  ▶ Inductive

  ▶ Idiographic, holistic understanding of individual perspectives

  ▶ Rich account of research participants' perspectives on a common experience

▶ Paradigm: Constructivist Interpretivist (Creswell, 2013)

  ▶ Assumed multiple social realities

  ▶ Constructed by social actors from their lived experience within social, cultural, and historical context

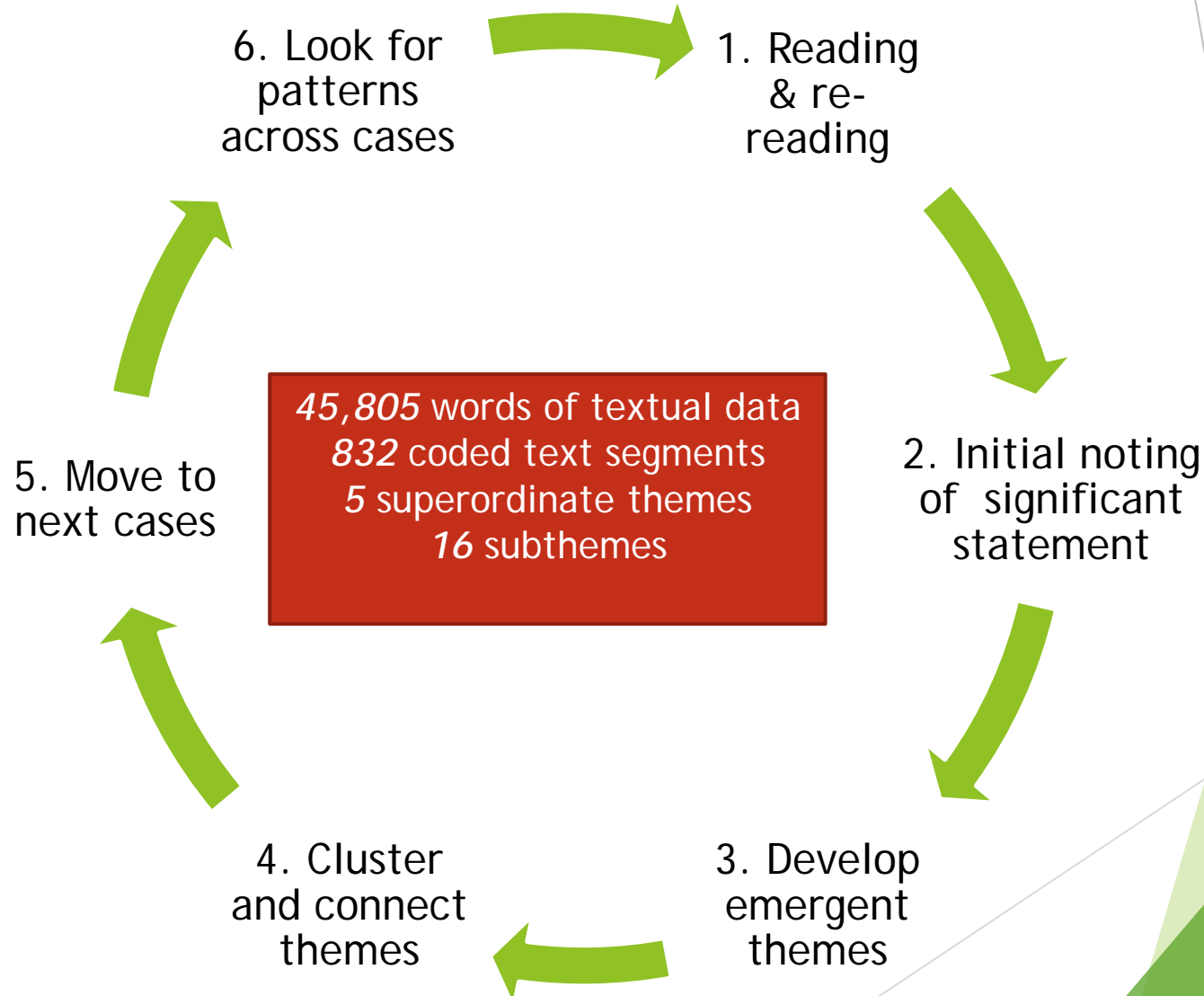 ▶ Seek understandings from the participants' subjective frame of reference

Site and Participants

▶ Sites:

  ▶ HEIs in Hong Kong

▶ Participants:

  ▶ Purposive, opportunistic, and snowball sampling

  ▶ 8 departmental leaders from 8 different HEIs

    ▶ >5-year experience

    ▶ Diversity in gender, institutional types, professional backgrounds, academic training, and academic qualifications

Data Collection

▶ Researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis of the voices of participants

1. Email invitation

2. 60- to 90-minute semi-structured, one-to-one interview

    1. At participant's own preferred, private, secured venue

    2. Followed the pre-designed interview protocol flexibly

    3. Adopted responsive interviewing model

    4. Audio-taped and verbatim transcribed

    5. Note-taking during the interview

3. Reflective journal during the process

Data Analysis through MAXQDA

6. Look for patterns across cases

1. Reading & re-reading

2. Initial noting of significant statement

3. Develop emergent themes

4. Cluster and connect themes

5. Move to next cases

45,805 words of textual data
832 coded text segments
5 superordinate themes
16 subthemes

Findings

Participants' Demographics

Participant (Pseudonym)	Gender	Leadership Level	Leadership Experience (Years)	Education	Institution Types #
Anna	F	Department	16.50	Ed.D	A
Benny	M	Department	16.00	Master's	B,D
Chloe	F	Program	8.25	Ph.D.	A,B,D
David	M	College/Faculty	15.25	Ph.D.	D
Ella	F	Department	5.50	Ph.D.	A
Francis	M	College/Faculty	22.00	Ed.D (candidate)	B,C,D
Gavin	M	Department	8.25	Ph.D. (candidate)	B,D
Hannah	F	Department	9.00	Ph.D. (candidate)	C,D

Type A: Publicly-funded degree-granting institutions, Type B: self-financing schools/colleges of publicly-funded degree-granting institutions, Type C: publicly-funded training institutes, Type D: independent self-financing institutions.

Evolving Roles of Dep't Leadership: From personal →local → Org levels

▶ Programme Level:

   ▶ Management of programme admission, delivery and QA processes

   ▶ Finding the right teaching team

   ▶ Motivating teaching and admin staff to enhance teaching and learning

▶ Departmental Level:

   ▶ Curriculum reform

   ▶ Resource allocation in teaching resources and facility enhancement

   ▶ Supporting staff professional development in teaching and research

   ▶ Building relationships with external stakeholders

   ▶ Alignment of departmental vision with those of Faculty/University

▶ Faculty/College Level:

   ▶ Developing common vision, mission, core values and strategic planning

   ▶ Balancing inter-unit resource allocation and coordination

   ▶ Developing policies, practices, and supportive culture/climate

   ▶ Driving organisational transformation

▶ From managerial (transactional leadership) towards transformational leadership

Identification of Recurring Theme 1

Super-ordinate Themes and Nested Themes	Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1. Top-down Approach in Leader Selection and Promotion									
1.1. Top-down leadership appointment		3	0	5	2	14	5	4	3
1.2. Academic credential and subject expertise		1	2	4	1	2	4	1	5
1.3. Interpersonal skills		2	1	3	0	2	5	2	2
1.4. Earned credibility and trust		1	3	6	1	4	6	2	6

Leadership appointment

• "*haphazard*" : "all of sudden", being "dumped" into the position

• "not about grooming me"

• "Didn't ask about my leadership skills"

• Perceived reasons: "easy-going", "convenient", "flexible"

Interpersonal skills

• "pillar of effective leadership", "get support"

Earned credibility

• building track record and trusts from supervisors and staff members

Identification of Recurring Theme 2

Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Super-ordinate Themes and Nested Themes								
2. Advancing Leadership Expertise through Reflective Practice								
2.1. Transformational vs. managerial leadership	5	6	14	3	8	7	5	6
2.2. Expertise development via on-the-job learning	18	17	16	10	11	17	25	11
2.3. Formal education for leader development	3	4	1	1	2	2	3	1

- Expertise development via on the job learning:
  - "to swim or sink", "day-to-day training", "different job assignments", "apprenticeship or mentorship", "reflect on my practice"
  - "We always need to have introspection"

- Formal education:
  "doesn't' work" vs. "gives structure of conceptual knowledge"

Identification of Recurring Theme 3

Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Super-ordinate Themes and Nested Themes								
3. Rich Developmental Experience as Catalyst for Growth								
3.1. Challenges as catalyst for growth	16	14	9	18	18	19	7	19
3.2. Performance assessment and feedback	1	5	11	0	2	0	4	4
3.3. Support availability	11	12	27	11	6	7	17	11

<u>Developmental experience</u>

- "Challenges helped me grow" ; "Decision-making allowed me to mature"
- "There is a certain scope to any experience"

<u>Progressive development:</u>

- " sometimes helpless", "struggling" ; "All of a sudden, you're in the dirt"
- "progressive", "step-by-step", "natural evolution"

<u>Performance Feedback:</u>

- "two-way communication" is critical; "no chance to talk…I hate most"

<u>Support:</u>

- "luckily" to have trusted informal mentors vs. "useless" formal mentorship

Identification of Recurring Theme 4

Participant Super-ordinate Themes and Nested Themes	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
4. Personal Drive as Impetus for Growth								
4.1. Career aspiration	3	1	5	5	9	5	1	2
4.2. Self-awareness of development needs	5	2	5	5	5	12	7	11
4.3. Motivation to develop	6	7	13	5	1	12	4	6

- ● <u>Career aspirations</u>
  - Builders of administrative career
  - Switcher from academic to administrative roles
  - Transitory leader who would resume scholarly pursuit in the future

- ● <u>Self-awareness</u>
  "be adaptive", "learn fast", "lead ahead" vs.
  "understand what kind of person you are", beyond that "will be out of my skin"

- ● <u>Motivation and self-regulatory strength</u>
  - "whether you want to learn from the world", "move out of comfort zone"
    "I want to conquer it" vs. "I am motivated by both Theory-X and -Y"
  - " Keep up myself" ,"I'm not emotional", "do best in your own boundary"

Identification of Recurring Theme 5

Super-ordinate Themes and Nested Themes	Participant	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
5. Leader Maturation Through Cumulative Learning									
5.1. Cumulative learning		2	4	7	6	2	8	5	1
5.2. Self-efficacy		2	1	3	1	3	1	2	6
5.3. Leader identity development		6	1	13	10	10	5	6	11

- <u>Cumulative learning</u>
  "understanding is knowing how the world works",
  "everything is accumulative", "ongoing learning process",
  "I can get different experiences. Eventually, I can consolidate all I have learned"
  "I…become a leader step by step. I can't miss any link in this *chain*"

- <u>Self-efficacy</u>
  "I've became more confident", "I consider myself as a fast learner", "I am sure…I can apply them [what I learned] to deal with current challenges here"

- <u>Leader identity development</u>
  "professionally there are certain goals that *I* must fulfill", "Position is one thing. Whether you are a leader…is another thing"
  " there is a limitation to how I can change myself. Beyond that it is not me"
  "become a role model" "convince them" ➜ " I'm here to help" ➜ "help them grow"

Conclusions

- Supported the relational, social-constructive perspective of leadership as:
  - multilevel social construction at the leader-follower dyad, team, organization, and the societal levels (Bligh et al., 2011)
  - ongoing process that occurs within a social context (Dinh et al., 2014)
  - co-constructional process of claiming and granting leader identity
- Supported views of longitudinal leader development:
  - As an adaptive learning process in which individual leaders make sense of their leadership experiences (Komives et al., 2006; Middlehurst, 2008)
  - involves not only acquisition of leadership expertise, but also construction of leader identity over time (Komives et al., 2006; Day et al., 2009)
  - mastery of expert performance is only achievable through persistent pursuit of personal growth over a leader's career (Ericsson et al., 2007; Day et al., 2009)
- Individuals' trajectories of leader development is affected by both contextual factors and individual differences (Day et al., 2009)
- organizations play an indispensable role in in providing a supportive environment to accelerate leader development.

Implications for HEIs' Practice

- Leader selection:

  - Neither a 'musical-chair' approach nor an ad-hoc top-down approach to leader selection will work effectively

  - Consider candidates' leadership potential: interpersonal skills, career aspiration, motivation to lead, self-awareness, openness to experience

- Leader development:

  - More effective to develop a pool of emerging leaders

  - Consider training programs to develop "reflective practitioners"

  - Design enriching developmental experiences as catalysts for growth

  - leader development interventions should be developmentally-appropriate

- Supportive organizational climate is vital:

  - Encourage informal mentoring/coaching by immediate supervisors

  - Social support brings about safe space for development

  - Senior management commitment to bringing out resources, policies and practices to foster personal development

A systemic approach to leader development is vital for sustainable success

Question-and-Answer Session

Thank you very much

for your comments and questions!

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