



CY-ICER 2014

The relationship between perceived academic leadership style and support for strategic planning

H. Serkan Akilli^a *, Aylin Alkaya^a, Husniye Akilli^a, Ruveyda Kizilboga^a

^a Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Nevsehir University, 50300 Nevsehir, Turkey

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to analyze the relationship between perceived academic leadership styles and support for strategic planning among faculty members at seven Turkish universities. A questionnaire was conducted among 101 faculty members at seven universities around Cappadocia region in Turkey in May 2013. The questionnaire form included Support for Strategic Planning Index developed by Welsh and Nunez (2005) and four academic leadership style scales (bureaucratic, entrepreneurial, collegial and distributive) prepared by the authors. One-way Anova test identified significant difference among faculty members according to academic titles. Post-hoc multiple comparisons of means showed that the assistant professors are more supportive about strategic planning than professors and associate professors. Correlation analysis showed significant positive relationship between support for strategic planning and entrepreneurial, collegial and distributive leadership styles. The findings presented here reflect the preliminary findings of an ongoing project, which aim to explore the role of academic leadership in strategic planning and quality assurance activities. The original sample size of the research project is 242, and out of this sample size, 101 are included here. Although it is not possible to generalize the results, the findings indicate important clues for fostering support for strategic planning. We recommend that non-administrative faculty members take more roles in strategic planning activities. It is important to stress the need for focusing on creating a collegial environment and distributing power among faculty members.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of CY-ICER 2014.

Keywords: Strategic planning, academic leadership, higher education, Turkey;

1. Introduction

During the last three decades massification, internationalization, marketization, and financial constraints has led

* Correspondence author: H. Serkan Akilli. Tel.: +90-384-228-1000 (ext. 1534)

E-mail address: h.serkanakilli@nevsehir.edu.tr

many countries to reform their higher education systems in order to meet proliferating demands of different shareholders (such as governments, business, students, and international organizations) [1]. The reforms which took place as a response to the above mentioned challenges created new higher education laws, new governmental and nongovernmental buffer bodies, new funding mechanisms, and new governance models [2] [3] [4]. Higher education system in Turkey is no exception, and it has been under constant pressure to change since mid-1990s [5].

Within this broader stream of transformation in higher education systems, strategic planning has become one of the most important instruments in terms of organizational change at Turkish higher education institutions today. Although successful implementation of strategic plans at the universities requires faculty support and academic leadership [6], there seems to be a gap in the literature about the relationship between the perceived academic leadership styles and faculty members' support for strategic planning at Turkish universities. In this paper we hope to contribute the literature by presenting the preliminary findings of a research project, which investigates the role of academic leadership in strategic planning activities. The following of the paper is organized in four sections. First, we present a short section about strategic planning in Turkey and emphasizing the role of academic leadership. Then we explain the methodology of the study, present findings, and finally we highlight the main conclusions of the study.

2. Strategic Planning and Academic Leadership

2.1. Strategic Planning

As part of the Public Financial Management and Control Law (Act no 5018), strategic planning became compulsory at public institutions in Turkey since 2006. According to the law, the public institutions must prepare their strategic plans in line with the development plans and programs. For the higher education institutions, this means they need to prepare their plans within the frame of the strategic plan of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). Strategic plans of higher education institutions blend strategies, quality enhancement processes, performance monitoring, and finally budget allocations [7]. So, it is safe to suggest that strategic planning is one of the most important instruments of organizational change in Turkish universities.

Employee attitudes about strategic planning have been investigated in different public and educational institutions in Turkey. However, there seems to be a gap in the literature about the faculty support for strategic planning. In the few empirical studies, there is evidence of support, accompanied with a sense of lack of participation and communication [8].

2.2. Academic Leadership

Although the consequences and the under lying reasons are a matter of discussion, there is agreement that changing higher education environment has increased responsibilities of the academic leaders [9]. New public management reforms have strengthened the managerial capacities of the academic leaders [10]. But leadership in academy requires more than strength and conventional leadership traits to successfully incorporate external as well as internal demands and expectations. Strategic planning is especially challenging for the academic leaders, since it touches core issues of institutional autonomy and it is prone to create conflict among highly critical academics [11] [12]. One option for the administrators is to avoid conflict and to prepare strategic plans away from lengthy consensus building processes. However, this may result in elaborate top-down plans without any real institutional support. Therefore, it is important to investigate the relationship between different leadership styles and support for strategic planning activities.

3. Methodology

The data used in this paper is taken from an on-going research project (NEUBAP13S20) about the role of academic leadership in strategic planning and quality assurance activities. In the project, the population was limited to academics that are employed at four-year faculties (professors, associate professors, and assistant professors) ($N=1.896$). In the research project, stratified cluster sampling approach was used to calculate the sample size ($n=242$). Here we used data, which was acquired from 101 respondents (Table 1). We used a questionnaire in order to collect data about support for strategic planning and perceived academic leadership styles among faculty members. The

survey was conducted at seven universities around Cappadocia Region in Turkey, in May 2013 (Figure 1). The question form included 7-point scale Support for Strategic Planning Index developed by Welsh and Nunez [6], and four academic leadership style scales derived from the literature [13] [14] [15] [16] [17] [18]. Bureaucratic, entrepreneurial, distributive, and collegial leadership styles were selected for the study. The leadership scales do not cover each style in detail, but they represent dominant properties.



Figure 1 Cappadocia Region, Turkey: The Research Area

Table 1. Information about Respondents (n=101)

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Academic Title	Professor	17	17
	Associate Prof.	28	28
	Assistant Prof.	56	55
Gender	Female	15	15
	Male	86	85
Administrator	Yes	62	61
	No	39	39
Active duty in identifying strategic planning policy	Yes	33	33
	No	68	67

The cases were weighted according to academic titles to reflect a better representation. Support for strategic plan (8 items; $\alpha = .820$), collegial leadership (10 items; $\alpha = .940$), entrepreneurial leadership (10 items; $\alpha = .935$), and distributive leadership (8 items; $\alpha = .859$) scales were highly reliable. Bureaucratic leadership scale failed the reliability test, so it was not used for further analysis. One-way ANOVA and independent t-tests were used to investigate differences among faculty members about support for strategic planning. Correlation test was used to examine the relationship between the three leadership styles and support for strategic planning.

4. Findings

One-way ANOVA test identified significant difference among faculty members according to academic titles; $F(2, 979) = 11.62, p = .000$. Post-hoc analysis using Dunnett T3 showed that the assistant professors ($M = 5.62, SD = .87$) are more supportive about strategic planning than professors ($M = 5.18, SD = 1.53$) and associate professors ($M = 5.36, SD = 1$).

Independent sample t- test showed that male faculty members ($M = 5.56, SD = 1.05$) are more supportive about

strategic planning than their female colleagues ($M=5.39$, $SD= .59$); $t= -2.84$, $p= .005$. There was no significant difference about support for strategic planning among administrators and non-administrators. Those who have an active role in deciding strategic planning policies also did not differ from those who do not have any role.

Correlation analysis at the significance level $p< .001$ revealed significant positive relationship between support for strategic planning and entrepreneurial ($r= .332$, $p= .000$), distributive ($r= .276$, $p= .000$), and collegial ($r= .203$, $p= .000$) leadership styles.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Strategic plans are one of the most important instruments of organizational change in higher education institutions. Successful preparation, implementation, and sustainability of strategic plans are closely related to faculty support. Strategic plans are legally mandatory at the universities, but it would be hard to avoid isomorphism if they lack institutional consensus.

The findings presented here do not allow us to make generalizations about the population as a whole. However, they indicate important clues for fostering support for strategic planning. According to our findings, it seems younger faculty members are more supportive than the professors. This may be an opportunity since 65% of the faculty members are assistant professors. However, professors are much more influential when it comes to determining institutional priorities and plans. So, it may be reasonable to suggest increased efforts to communicate more with the professors when setting strategic plan policies.

The main aim of this study was to investigate relationship between academic leadership styles and support for strategic planning. We found significant correlation between three leadership styles and support for strategic planning. It seems entrepreneurial leadership has the strongest relationship and the perceived level of entrepreneurial leadership ($M=4.76$, $SD=1.25$) is also higher than collegial ($M=4.59$, $SD=1.37$), and distributive styles ($M=4.42$, $SD= 1.13$). These findings may reflect the general tendency of the universities towards entrepreneurialism because of shrinking state allowances and financial constraints. However, we believe it is equally important to emphasize the role of enhancing collegial environment and distributing power among faculty members.

The items used to measure leadership styles in this study do not cover all dimensions of the relevant styles. They rather represent dominant properties. So, further study may focus on in-depth analysis of the relationship between individual styles and support for strategic planning.

Acknowledgements

The findings presented here are preliminary results of the authors' on-going research project titled "The Role of Academic Leadership in Strategic Planning and Quality Assurance Activities (NEUBAP13S20)" and the Scientific Research Projects Coordination Office, Nevsehir University, supports it.

References

- Altbach, P. G., Reisberg, L., & Rumbley, L. E. (2009). *Trends in global higher education: Tracking an academic revolution*. Executive Summary. Paris: UNESCO.
- De Boer, H., & File, J. (2009). *Higher education reforms across europe*. Brussels: ESMU.
- Gayle, D. J., Tewarie, B., & White, A. Q. (2003). Governance in the Twenty-First-Century University: Approaches to Effective Leadership and Strategic Management. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*, 30(1), s. 1-40.
- Johnstone, D. B., Arora, A., & Experton, W. (1998). *The financing and management of higher education : a status report on worldwide reforms*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- Undersecretaryship of State Planning Office. (1996). *Seventh Development Plan: 1996-2000*. Retrieved 2013, from Ministry of Development: www.dpt.gov.tr
- Welsh, J. F., & Nunez, W. (2005). Faculty and administrative support for strategic planning: a comparison of two- and four-year institutions. *Community College Review*, 32(4), pp. 20-39.
- Commission of Academic Assessment and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education. (2007). *Guideline on Academic Assessment and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education*. Ankara: YODEK.
- Aydin, M. D., & Aksoy, S. (2007). Kamu kesiminde stratejik planlama ve çalışanlara yansımaları: hacettepe üniversitesi örneği. *H.Ü. İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 25(1), 293-322.
- Birnbaum, R. (1999). Academic Leadership at the Millennium: Politics or Porcelain? *Academe*, 85(3), 14-19.

- Asking, B., & Stensaker, B. (2002). Academic leadership: Prescriptions, practices and paradoxes. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 8(2), 113-125.
- Deem, R. (2010). Herding the academic cats. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 14(2), 37-43.
- Gallos, J. V. (2002). The Myths and Realities of Academic Leadership in the Middle. *The Dean's Squeeze: Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 1(2), 174-184.
- Birnbaum, R. (1988). *How Colleges Work: The Cybernetics of Academic Organization and Leadership*. San Francisco: Josey Bass.
- Cohen, M. D., & March, J. G. (1986). *Leadership and Ambiguity* (2 ed.). Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Slaughter, S., & Leslie, L. L. (1999). *Academic capitalism: politics, policies, and the entrepreneurial university*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Gronn, P. (2002). Distributed leadership as a unit of analysis. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(4), s. 423-451.
- Harris, A. (2009). Distributed Leadership: What We Know. In A. Harris, *Distributed Leadership: Different Perspectives* (pp. 11-21). Springer.
- Jones, S., Lefoe, G., Harvey, M., & Ryland, K. (2012). Distributed leadership: a collaborative framework for academics, executives and professionals in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 34(1), pp. 67-78.