Challenges of Leading Expatriate Academics

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To attract a greater number of students both at home and abroad, many higher education institutions have made internationalization a priority. The trend towards internationalizing by opening branch campuses, arranging cross-border collaborations, twinning, franchising, and having joint or double degree arrangements has led to an increase in the mobility of academic labour. Often, higher education leaders are promoted through the ranks of academia and are underprepared for leading a diverse workforce that includes expatriate academics. Expatriate academics face many challenges as they attempt to adjust to new roles and lives in foreign countries. Thus, they usually require more support than local staff. Leadership style can have a large impact on an employee's job satisfaction and performance. Given the emphasis placed on internationalization at higher education institutions, it is important for universities to develop leaders with the abilities to incorporate a range of leadership styles. This can help leaders to effectively meet the challenges of their increasingly complex roles. In this context, I propose the consideration of servant leadership as a potential leadership style that may be well suited to help higher education leaders meet the needs of their expatriate academic staff.

Knight (2015) defined internationalization as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of postsecondary education" (p. 2). Knight further noted that internationalization has become a key driver for growth for many higher education institutions around the world. The most noticeable way in which internationalization has impacted higher education is in the flow of students across national boundaries (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2010). However, international mobility is not confined to the student body; it is also found increasingly among academics (Richardson & McKenna, 2003). Although the higher education literature demonstrates significant interest in the mobility of tertiary students, the internationalization of academic staff has been less well analyzed, even though scholars from many regions have become increasingly mobile (Richardson, 2000).

The management and leadership of expatriate academic staff is an important consideration for most higher education institutions that wish to be competitive in today's globalized higher education landscape, yet this aspect of leadership in higher education is still understudied (Selmer & Lauring, 2013). Leading expatriate academics adds an extra dimension to traditional leadership thinking, as expatriates must grapple with challenges not faced by local employees (Richardson &

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Zikic, 2007). These unique challenges extend the scope of what may be thought of as a leader's traditional role, as leaders must provide supports for expatriate academics that frequently fall outside of official job duties. To foster a positive work climate, a wide mix of leadership skills and behaviours must be incorporated into a leader's "toolbox" to lead expatriate staff as they grapple with the challenge of not only adjusting to a new role, but also a new life in a foreign country (Goleman, 2000).

Failure to understand the needs of expatriate academics can lead to low job satisfaction and organizational commitment, poor work performance, high turnover, and impact employee performance and productivity (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). Strategic and effective leadership can improve an organization's ability to sustain profitability, productivity, and a competitive advantage (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). In light of these concerns, this article begins with an examination of the trend towards the internationalization of higher education and the impact it is having on the mobility of academic labour across international borders. Next, there is an overview of some of the challenges faced by expatriate academic staff. This is followed with a discussion of the leadership challenges involved in leading expatriate academic staff. Then there is a discussion of the effects of leadership styles on organizational outcomes. Finally, there is an examination of the potential of servant leadership as a leadership style in the context of leading expatriate academic staff.

Internationalization of Higher Education

In the era of globalization, internationalization has become an opportunity for higher education institutions across the world to increase their revenue and profits (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Whether it be to increase enrolment, expand market access, or develop an institution's reputation and international ranking, the concept of the internationalization of higher education has moved from the fringes of institutional interests to the very core (Brandenburg & De Wit, 2015). Universities have dramatically expanded the volume, scope, and complexity of international activities during the past two decades (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Internationalization for a university consists largely of two main spheres of action, commonly characterized as *internationalization at home* and *internationalization abroad* (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). Internationalization at home includes internationalization strategies that occur on the home campus, while internationalization abroad happens across borders (Knight, 2004). Furthermore, the mobility of the labour market and the increase in cultural diversity of communities and the workplace require that both students and academics have an increased understanding of what is needed to work and live in a culturally diverse environment, and demonstrate such skills (Knight, 2004). The primary focus of this article relates to internationalization abroad, as many higher education institutions around the world have internationalized their degrees and programs and established foreign branch campuses in other countries (Gopal, 2011).

Altbach and Knight (2007) identified the factors driving the focus on internationalization as (a) commercial advantage, (b) knowledge and language acquisition, and (c) curriculum enhancement with international content. Altbach and Knight noted many different initiatives that universities pursue to internationalize including (a) branch campuses, (b) cross-border collaborative arrangements, (c) twinning, franchising, and (d) joint or double degree arrangements. Any of these initiatives may require expatriate faculty to operate effectively.

Knight (2004) explained that from a national perspective, an increasing emphasis on the knowledge economy, demographic shifts, mobility of the labour force, and increased trade in services are all factors that drive nations to place more importance on developing and recruiting

human capital or brain power through international education initiatives. Thus, Knight concluded, there are signs of heightened pressure and interest to recruit the brightest scholars from other countries to increase scientific, technological, and economic competitiveness.

Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009) asserted that the burgeoning number of international agreements between tertiary institutions often includes long and short-term faculty exchange components, and these programs move countless numbers of scholars around the globe each year to teach and conduct research abroad. The movement of academic staff across borders can bring with it many benefits including (a) prestige, (b) quality control in program delivery, (c) language expertise, and (d) the potential for professional development in the areas of pedagogy and research. This movement also creates greater diversity within university staff (Altbach & Knight, 2007). The problem of managing expatriate academics is an important and complex issue that needs to be addressed strategically (Richardson & McKenna, 2002).

Much of the focus of internationalization seems to be on student recruitment and retention as these aspects are the main source of revenue for higher education institutions (Brandenburg & de Wit, 2011). However, efforts to monitor international initiatives and ensure quality are integral to the international higher education environment (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Academic staff are responsible for delivering the programs that students enroll in and for differentiating the university from others in the market. The expanding numbers of expatriate academics has resulted in more international faculty representing different national cultures, and this increase in diversity presents growing challenges for institutions of higher education who must prepare their academic leaders to manage expatriate academics effectively (Selmer & Lauring, 2011).

Challenges Faced by Expatriate Academics

Many expatriate academics initially view their new job in a foreign country as an adventure potentially full of the excitement of overseas travel (Garson, 2005). However, working overseas presents some challenges that need to be considered by leadership, whether local or expatriates themselves, at higher education institutions that employ foreign academic staff. In getting ready for such an experience, it is important that academics are prepared for the some of the possible phases of culture shock: (a) the honeymoon, in which euphoria and adventure initially overshadow the mundane tasks of house hunting, finding schools for children, and finding acceptable food; and (b) irritation and hostility, which involve numerous adjustment problems (Xia, 2009). As well, it is commonplace to hear stories within expatriate academic circles of "nightmare" schools with poor leadership. The harsh reality is that some academics will find themselves in situations where they must overcome difficulties at the hands of an overseas employer, and this can extend beyond problems at work to engaging in battles with employers to secure basic living arrangements (Richardson & McKenna, 2002). With the ever-increasing movement of labour across international borders in higher education, leaders must understand the challenges faced by expatriate academic staff, both at the office and in the host country, and help to overcome these challenges, as this may be useful in attracting international faculty, as well as retaining incumbent faculty (Richardson & McKenna, 2007).

Froese (2012) identified three distinct facets of expatriate cross-cultural adjustment: (a) general adjustment, which involves coping with living in a foreign country; (b) interactive adjustment, which involves establishing relationships with locals; and (c) work adjustment, which involves the way expatriates fit into the workplace. This places a greater responsibility for their care in the hands of academic leaders, as researchers found a link between perceived organizational support and the work adjustment of expatriates (Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001). Adjustment

problems experienced by expatriates may have fundamental consequences for an organization (Selmer & Lauring, 2009). Richardson (2000) found that expatriates' ability to adjust had a major influence on their professional and personal experiences during their overseas appointment. An inability to adjust both professionally and personally had a detrimental effect on their performance at work, which had a detrimental effect on their home life (Richardson, 2000).

Challenges Faced by Leaders of Expatriate Academics

Leadership is identified as one of the key features of effective internationalization (Francis, 1993). Higher education institutions must be prepared for the changes and challenges of a highly competitive and increasingly global environment and addressing these changes means finding ways to align organizational capacity with environmental demands and opportunities (Taylor & Machado, 2006). Leadership in higher education is fundamental for institutional development and sustainability in today's rapidly changing world, yet there is a lack of formalized leadership preparation for this important role (Gonaim, 2016).

Academic leaders require a diverse set of leadership capabilities, such as well-honed communication skills, problem-solving skills, conflict resolution skills, cultural leadership skills, coaching skills, and transition skills (Wolverton, Ackerman, & Holt, 2005). In addition to these capabilities, Bryman (2007) identified some of the behaviours of effective educational leaders which include (a) being considerate, (b) treating academic staff fairly and with integrity, (c) being trustworthy and having personal integrity, and (d) creating a positive and collegial atmosphere. Effective leadership can affect the satisfaction and performance of employees within an organization (Drury, 2004). In addition, leadership style has been found to directly affect organizational commitment (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). Leaders who want to become successful need to learn and adapt to and lead people from diverse cultures (Eken, Özturgut, & Craven, 2014). In addition to the already long list of leadership capabilities and behaviours expected when managing academic staff, increased diversity of staff demands that leaders employ these capabilities and skills with a global mindset (Chuang, 2003).

Leadership Styles and Organizational Impact

Given the challenges faced by leaders of expatriate academics, it is important to understand different leadership styles and their organizational impact. Specifically, leadership is a blend of special traits and behaviors that influence followers to achieve a common goal. It is the process of influencing others to understand and agree on what needs to be done and how to do it, as well as the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives (Eken, Özturgut, & Craven, 2014). Leaders carry out this process by employing a blend of traits and behaviours known as a leadership style. The leadership style at a higher education institution can impact the quality of life and job satisfaction of expatriate academic staff and this, in turn, can have a direct impact on the achievement of organizational objectives (Nanjundeswaraswamy& Swamy, 2014). Kraimer, Wayne, and Jaworski (2001) found that expatriates who had high-quality relationships with their supervisors were more effective in completing their job responsibilities and that effort extended by the supervisors translated into better expatriate performance at work. Therefore, careful consideration should be given to leadership styles when managing expatriate academic staff.

Leadership style is an important variable influencing how members of an organization function. Leadership style has a direct impact on employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, as well as employee performance and productivity (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).

Leaders who can effectively integrate various leadership styles can help higher education institutions achieve their internationalization goals (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014) by creating a supportive work environment that positively impacts expatriate work performance (Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001).

Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) found that leadership style is an important predictor of organizational performance and it is an antecedent of organizational commitment, which is the factor that links employees to the organization and helps the organization succeed. Yahaya and Ebrahim also noted that commitment has been found to be related to positive organizational outcomes such as job performance, employee satisfaction, and turnover. The authors concluded that there is a positive relationship between effective leadership style and organizational commitment that leads to highly committed, more satisfied employees, the result of working under the right type of leader.

Vroom and Jago (2007) noted that all leadership styles present some form of benefit and are effective in certain contexts. There is no single leadership style that can be effective in all situations. Furthermore, Vroom and Jago contended that the appropriate leadership style depends on the situation faced by the leader. Situational variables play into the leadership process in three distinct ways: (a) organizational effectiveness is affected by situational factors not under a leader's control, (b) situations shape how leaders behave, and (c) situations influence the consequences of leader behavior (Vroom & Jago, 2007). Given the complexity of managing culturally diverse academic staff, leaders should be aware of and able to employ various leadership styles when necessary. Goleman (2000) noted that instead of adherence to one style, the most effective executives use a collection of distinct leadership styles when necessary. Such flexibility is tough to put into action, but it pays off in performance. Academic leaders may find that they are naturally more suited to certain leadership styles over others, and this may lead them to favour these leadership styles; however, Goleman suggested that the most effective leaders switch among the leadership styles as needed. This approach seems most appropriate given the rapidly changing landscape of higher education leadership in the 21st century.

Leadership styles can affect the quality of work life and overall happiness of expatriate academics (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). Given the impact leadership style has on achieving an organization's goals, higher education institutions should invest in formal leadership development for academic leaders. Specifically, this development should seek to improve leaders' awareness of leadership styles, to give them the skills to recognize when different styles are appropriate and, to help them be able to effectively integrate styles depending on the situation they face.

Moving Forward: The Potential of Servant Leadership for Expatriate Academic Staff

At present, leadership that is rooted in ethical and caring behavior is becoming important as a key factor for engaging employees and flourishing organizations (Van Dierendonck, 2011). The increased mobility of labour in higher education brings with it greater freedom of movement than ever before for academic staff. Universities benefit from being able to recruit from a global talent pool and recruiting the best talent is important. However, retaining it is equally, if not more, important. Today, with the benefit of internet forums, expatriate academic staff can easily spread the word about good and bad schools, which has an impact on a school's ability to attract teachers from abroad. By supporting staff and creating the conditions for them to successfully do their job, an organization will be better able to meet its goals through better job performance and long-term retention of talent (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016).

Kraimer, Wayne, and Jaworski (2001) found that perceived organizational support had a direct effect on expatriate adjustment, which in turn had a direct impact on work performance. Perceiving little or no support from senior leadership, individuals may feel isolated and frustrated (Francis, 1993). To address these problems, one possible approach which appears to be a good fit with the general needs of expatriate academic staff is servant leadership. Anderson and Sun (2017) stated that servant leadership is a style that focuses on the growth of those who are being simultaneously led and served. Servant leadership takes place when leaders assume the position of servant in their relationships with fellow workers and the main motivation is to focus on the needs of others (Greenleaf, 1997). Servant leadership aligns well with expatriate academics' need for support when they transition to a new life in a host country. Servant leadership is a broad concept encompassing many key characteristics, including: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, foresight, commitment to the growth of people, and building community (Russell & Stone, 2002). Based on these characteristics and the overall goal of serving others, servant leadership aligns well with the values of higher education institutions, as many of these characteristics must be applied when nurturing the development of students at the post-secondary level (Barnes, 2015).

Gonaim (2016) suggested that since many academics who transition into leadership roles within departments or colleges have no experience leading large-scale organizations, the need for a servant leadership perspective is significant. The act of teaching and helping students to achieve their goals is itself a form of servant leadership. Servant leadership is demonstrated when leaders empower and develop people; express humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship; and provide direction (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leadership is anchored in the human drive to bond with others and contribute to the betterment of society. An emphasis on service motivation, as demonstrated by empowering and developing people with empathy and humility, differentiates servant leadership from other leadership frameworks (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). Academics who transition into leadership roles should already have a solid servant leadership foundation and should be comfortable in applying it (Barnes, 2015). The key is recognizing the transferable characteristics and behaviours between teaching and servant leadership, and knowing when they are most suitably applied.

Although it is not a one-size-fits-all solution to leadership challenges, servant leadership could be considered by academic leaders managing expatriate academic staff due to its focus on developing and supporting people, and wide acceptance across cultures (Mittal & Dorfman, 2012). In addition to this, servant leadership shares many of the characteristics and behaviours of good teachers, so adopting it is not a stretch for academics who are promoted to leadership positions. Expatriate academic staff will face many challenges both inside and outside the office, and servant leadership can be directly applied to helping them with the challenges.

One of the drawbacks of this leadership style however, is that it is not a firmly established leadership theory. Russell and Gregory Stone (2002) indicated that although many theorists and researchers espouse servant leadership as a valid model for modern organizational leadership, it is still a somewhat undefined and unsupported theory that lacks empirical evidence of real-world application and success. Designing a training program to promote the development of servant leadership skills among academic leaders may be challenging as the theory lacks credibility in relation to other leadership theories. I suggest that future research could explore the work/life satisfaction of expatriate academics at institutions that embrace servant leadership. Additionally, there is scope for research into academic leaders' experiences with servant leadership and their perceptions of its effectiveness in relation to their needs in managing expatriate academics.

Conclusion

A shift towards a more market-oriented higher education sector in many countries, combined with the increase in demand for higher education across the world has led many universities to engage in internationalization as a method to grow their tuition base (Barber, Donnelly, & Rizvi, 2013). Internationalization has created an increase in the international mobility of labour in the higher education sector, and an increasing number of academic staff find themselves working outside of their home country (Richardson & McKenna, 2003). Expatriate academic staff often face challenges when working abroad and require additional support both at the office and in their daily lives. Gonaim (2016) suggested that many leaders in higher education are promoted through the ranks of academia and are not properly trained in leadership. The current role of an academic leader is highly complex, and many may find it difficult to adapt. In addition to this, academic leaders may not possess the knowledge and skills required to create the necessary conditions for expatriate academic staff to adapt and thrive in their new work environment. A leader's style can have a significant impact on employee output and the ability for an organization to meet its goals (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014).

With the huge university investments in internationalization efforts, it is essential that leaders can lead a diverse workforce to achieve success. More investment needs to be made by higher education institutions in training academic leaders to become confident in their leadership roles. Leadership is highly dependent on situation (Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 1979). There is no one best way to lead in today's increasingly complicated world. Academic leaders need to be able to understand and apply many different leadership styles in order solve the diverse problems they face every day (Goleman, 2000). One possibility is servant leadership, which is a leadership style that is in line with the values of higher education. Academics who become leaders could apply servant leadership in many situations, since it shares many of the same principles as being an educator. Its key traits of empowering and developing people are well-suited for supporting expatriate academic staff as they adjust to their new lives in new countries. Higher education institutions need to put more emphasis on developing the leadership skills of their academic leaders, and could consider including the principles of servant leadership in their leadership development programs as managing expatriate staff becomes more important with the increased internationalization of universities.

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