Essay

The Roles of a Director, Cooperative Education:
Leading, Managing and Administration

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Technikon Witwatersrand, a polytechnic-type higher education institution in South Africa, has recently established a cooperative education unit. The position of *Director, Cooperative Education and Placement*, for the unit is classified (and graded) as a management position. A number of questions arose as a consequence of this: which of the tasks executed by a director may be categorized as leadership, management and administration; and, what proportion of time is spent on each of these aspects in the first 100 days 'in office'? Management activities cannot be isolated totally from those of leadership and administration although there are clear distinctions in some instances. But a manager usually also has to be something of a leader and an administrator. This essay explores the tensions between leadership, management and administration and offers an insight into how these three aspects relate to the activities of a new director of cooperative education at a South African Technikon. The topic is different from that found in many publications in the cooperative education literature and the author invites readers in a similar position to present accounts of their own experiences. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 200, 4(1), 19- 23).*

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Technikon Witwatersrand finds itself in a changing higher education landscape along with the other public South African universities and technikons (Asmal, 2002). Technikons are specific types of higher education institutions, with a focus on providing formative career education and training at the tertiary level, rather than on general scientific development (Van Wyk, 1999). This vocation-based technikon education is recognized one of the forms of cooperative education (Coll, 2003).

Cooperative education as a strategy for combining classroom learning with on the job training is becoming well known and understood. The close interaction between the learner (student), the education institution and the employer (public or private sector partner) characterizes cooperative education. This provides an invaluable opportunity for learners to match the theory and principles in a particular study field learned in the classroom with actual real-life world of work practice.

Both the education sector and the world of work are governed by legislation. This legislation not only has to be adhered to, but it also may affect the way learning and working happens.

As public institutions, technikons are established in terms of legislation and their powers and duties are embodied in legislation, with a management structure that is responsible for the leadership of the institution and its day-to-day management and administration.

Most tertiary education institutions have both vision and mission statements that give focus and direction to their activities. The person at the helm of a tertiary institution is often termed the leader (rather than manager) of the institution, with the success of the institutions influenced by the leadership, managerial and administrative strengths of the manager or managers. Higher education institutions in South Africa are nominally headed by a Chancellor (usually a prominent business or political figure), but are managed by a Vice-chancellor who is in effect the chief executive officer (CEO) for that institution.

Technikon Witwatersrand recently established a *Cooperative Education and Placement Unit* and appointed a director for this unit: someone to lead, manage and administer the activities of the unit to ensure its operational end educational success. This unit had at the time of the preparation of this paper been in existence for 100 days.

Just as the institution as a whole has to be led, managed and administered, so too must each of the functioning units

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within the institution. This is no less true for the Unit and it too, required a manager with a combination of leadership, management and administrative skills.

Some questions arose from reflection on the above issues: to what degree was leadership, management and administrative skills required during the first 100 days 'in office' (as it were) of the director of the Unit? What were the main tasks involved?; and, were some aspects of leadership, management and administration more important than others?

In this paper the author reflects on these questions and attempts to plot the journey of a director of cooperative education in the beginning phase of this new role. The intention is to provide an understanding of the lived experience of a manger in a new posting, with a view of helping individuals in other institutions that face similar challenges.

The literature generally looks at the role of management as being threefold – to lead, manage and to administer. Each of these activities is important, yet each in turn requires different skills and arguably personality traits. The *Cooperative Education and Placement Unit* at Technikon Witwatersrand is a newly established unit and the first 100 days is seen as a milestone, generally taken as an important one for any new endeavor. Hence the author proposes the following question which is the focus of this paper:

What proportion of the activities of the *Director, Cooperative Education and Placement Unit* [the author] required leadership, management and administrative skills during the first 100 days of this newly established unit at Technikon Witwatersrand?

Literature Review

Cooperative Education

Technikons are higher education institutions that are legislated to offer career-focused, vocation-based higher education programs (Department of Education [DoE], 1993). This is largely achieved by following the cooperative education model. Cooperative education as an educational model has become well established both in South Africa and internationally. The World Association for Cooperative Education (WACE) sees cooperative education as combining classroom learning with learning on the job, bringing this on the job learning back to class for further analysis and reflection. Cooperative education as WACE sees it thus has as an objective the improvement of the relationship between education and work ([WACE, 2000).

Legislation Affecting Higher Education

Higher education institutions in South Africa must comply with the *Higher Education Act* (DoE, 1997). This Act, among others, sets the policies under which universities and technikons operate. Vocational training or education is specifically a part of the mission of technikons, which use cooperative education or experiential learning as a means of realizing this.

The *South African Qualifications Authority* (SAQA) is in the process of implementing the *National Qualifications Framework* (NQF) (DoE, 1995b). This allows for the recognition of prior learning and works on the basis of competencies being attained in steps, by means of unit standards. These competencies/unit standards may be combined into a formal qualification. The *Higher Education Act* affects higher education institutions in that they have to adapt their qualifications to comply with the unit standard approach within four years.

Legislation Affecting the World of Work

The most recent legislation promulgated that affects the world of work is the *Labour Relations Act* (Department of Labour [DoL], 1995a) and its amendments, the *Skills Development Act* (DoL, 1998) and the *Skills Development Levy Act* (DoL, 1999). The *Labour Relations Act* makes it imperative that companies hire the right staff as it makes the dismissal of staff difficult. Clearly, in these circumstances industry wish to employ the most competent person for the job first time. The cooperative education model can thus serve to help industry select and appoint appropriate entry-level staff. This occurs because companies may retain learners that do work placements in the organization as full-time staff at the end of their placements. By implication, these learners will then already know the company, its policies and work-methods and the job, thus being skilled entry-level staff. The skills development levy requires companies to pay a levy into the *Skills Development Fund*, part of which they can recover if certain conditions are complied with. One of these is proof that they have sent their staff on SAQA/NQF approved training programs.

Concepts: Leadership, Management and Administration

According to Greenberg and Baron (1993) the terms 'leadership' and 'management' are often used interchangeably. The literature, as will become clear below, does, however, attempt to distinguish between the two concepts as well as the concept of administration.

Leadership

There are a variety of definitions and descriptions of the term leadership reported in the literature. For example, Goetsch and Davis (1997) see leadership as inclusive in nature a role in which managers show "the ability to inspire people to make a total, willing and voluntary commitment to accomplishing or exceeding organizational goals' (p. 192). In contrast, Arnold and Feldman (1986) see leadership as more directive in nature arguing, "leadership involves the exercise of influence on the part of the leader over the behaviour of one or more other people" (p. 120).

Arnold and Feldman (1986) discuss the nature of leadership and go on to state that there are as many definitions of leadership as there are researchers looking into this topic and point out that over 3000 empirical studies of leadership have been reported in the literature. Goetsch and Davis (1997) argue that the reasons for so many definitions

are that authors and researchers ascribe to different perspectives according to the different fields of endeavour: military, athletic, business, education to name but a few.

Interestingly, a dictionary definition of to 'lead' has connotations of guidance by being in front, of guidance by persuasion, of inducing others to do things (Readers' Digest, 1964), again indicative of influence and control. Other authors see leaders as inspiring others (Goetsch & Davis, 1997), "overcoming resistance to change by achieving willing and voluntary commitment to shared goals and values" (p. 93), and using influence rather than power to set an example. These latter views which are less directive and controlling in nature are considered leadership for the purpose of this paper.

Management

Ask anyone what a manager does and you are likely to get the reply that mentions activities such as: plans, controls, leads and organizes. Managers clearly follow a goal specified by the person to whom they are directly responsible. They also must achieve the goals by utilizing the budgeted for resources (including people) as effectively and efficiently as possible.

The following tasks/duties are generally seen as being those of a manager: planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling by Engler (1993) (based on a list of qualities of a 'good manager' presented by Lambert & Stock, 1993): motivation, planning, organization, control, communication, supervision, and problem solving.

Arnold and Feldman (1986) review of the research literature for numerous studies characterizes the main aspects of a manager's day-to-day job as: a high quantity of work, with brief and varied activities; highly structured work day; much verbal contact; and, considerable time spent with employees. Engler (1993) identifies leading as a basic management duty, specifying it as "directing and channelling human behaviour toward the accomplishment of objectives" (p. 5). Hence, according to the literature, leadership seems to be a key aspect of management.

A dictionary definition of management describes it as an "act of managing; state of being managed; body of persons managing a business etc.; administration of business concerns or public undertaking." (Readers' Digest, 1964). Hence, according to this definition at least, administration also seems to be an aspect of management. As a consequence literature definitions of administration are described below.

Administration

According to Millard (2002) managers are goal- and people-oriented, whereas administrators are more "directly involved in producing results from policies" (p. 1). This suggests that administration is a task-oriented activity involving what may still (even in this new age of information, communication and e-commerce) be seen as 'paperwork'.

Administrators thus have to pay careful attention to detail and must ensure that all legislation (policies and procedures)

is adhered to. Millard (2002) suggests that for firms to be successful, they must be administered properly seeing effective administration as a basic necessity for survival. He goes on to say that administration should not be confused with management seeing both of these functions as important for success of an institution.

With specific reference to education administration, Campbell-Gibson, Justus and Vincent-Lambert (2002) coined the following definition: "Administrators are responsible for maintenance, provision and support services. They are not directly involved in the learning process" (p. 10).

Within higher education as in other organizations, there is a variety of administrative activities, each revolving around a specific function within the institution. In the higher education context these include: committee administration (e.g., ensuring that meeting procedures are adhered to); faculty administration (e.g., involving regulations surrounding the curricula); and, examination administration (e.g., assuring quality and security pertaining to examination paper and results management).

Overview of the Establishment of the Cooperative Education and Placement Unit at Technikon Witwatersrand

The *Cooperative Education and Placement Unit* at Technikon Witwatersrand is a relatively new unit at the institution, officially starting its operation in July 2002 with appointment of the author as the director of the Unit. The Unit reports directly to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic). Currently the director is a sole charge post having to take on multiple roles of leader, manager and administrator the details of which are outlined below.

The main function of the Unit is to look after all aspects involved in the experiential learning placement, graduate placement and international placement of students by initiating new, and fostering existing, employer contacts and supporting the 35 lecturers who act as cooperative education placement coordinators.

The author also acted as coordinator of the task team that investigated the establishment of the Unit for the institution. Her interview presentation for the post of director had to outline the way the Unit would be managed. Emphasis was placed on responsible self-management, as the Unit would have no staff other than the director initially.

Director of Cooperative Education and Placement Unit: A Reflective Journey

Reflective Journal

The journey of the director of *Cooperative Education and Placement Unit* was plotted by means of a reflective journal, which formed the diary of the director following the procedures recommended, by Emory and Cooper (1991). The writer subsequently collated the results of an analysis of the diary contents with respect to the number of hours of activities spent on leadership, management and administrative aspects of the daily tasks of the director as recorded in the diary. For the purpose of the above

allocation, the following definitions apply:

- *Leadership Tasks*: Tasks that required vision, strategic thinking, inspiration of others to follow a course of action and innovation
- *Management Tasks*: Tasks that are traditionally associated with management such as planning, controlling and organization of activities of the Unit as is expected of a manager. The aim is to achieve the key results of the job expectations within the resources allocated
- *Administrative Tasks*: Tasks that are specifically related to ensuring adherence to legislation, policy and procedures.

The following steps outline the process followed in the analysis undertaken:

Step 1: Establishment of what constituted 'a day'

Step 2: Determination of what was meant by 'the first 100 days of the Unit'

Step 3: Establishment and explanation of the broad categories of daily activities

Step 4: Allocation of leadership, management and administrative activities into these broad categories (with justification for each such choice)

Step 5: Review of Steps 3 and 4 by author and a third party

Step 6: Tabulation of diary entries into revised allocated categories as per Steps 3-5 with the linking of the time needed to prepare for the specific activity. Travel time would be included here as this is a factor, partly due to the multiple campuses of the institution.

A frequency count of the occurrences of the data items was made and summarized (totals presented) in Table 1.

Table 1
Summary of activities allocated to leadership, management and administration

Category	Time	%	[1]Time +	%
Leadership	47.7	25%	109.9	33%
Management	135.4	72%	197.3	60%
Administration	5.1	3%	22.0	7%
Total	188.5	100%	330.0	100%

Key and Comments

A separate column indicating a time estimate (where no exact timing was possible) for each activity is provided and indicated as [1]Time+ in Table 1. Travel time and preparation time for each activity is included. This is an estimate, as the director kept no detailed time sheets.

Analysis of Unit Director Tasks: The First 100 Days

Analysis of the task from examination of the diary examined the daily activities according to the diary of the Unit director for the first 100 days in office. Analysis of the diary revealed that of the 100 calendar days, 28 represented weekends, two were public holidays and two were taken as annual leave. Thus the journal looked at 68 working days (i.e., 100 – (28 + 2 + 2)). A typical workday consisted of seven hours and thus the journal covered 476 hours (i.e., 68 days x 7 hours/day)

Analysis of diarized hours showed that of the 476 hours available, 188.5 are directly accounted for from the analysis of the diary. The findings are as follows: the total travel time estimated to be 90 hours for the duration of the study; total preparation time for meetings, workshops and presentations was estimated to be 50.5 hours. No data are available for telephone, email and mail activities as the telephone division at the institution was not able to supply a log of outgoing and internal telephone calls made in time for inclusion in this study. Incoming calls also are not logged.

The author attempted to obtain details of the number of received and sent emails. Due to the changing of the mail server, this information was only available from 9 September 2002 until 23 October 2002. In the 32 working days relevant to the study, 567 emails were received and 360 were sent an average of 17.72 emails received per working day and 11.25 sent.

Of the 476 hours available 330 hours were allocated to aspects dealing with leadership, management and administration (Table 1). The total number of hours 'unaccounted for' (i.e., 476 – 330 = 146 hours), is assumed to have been spent on telephonic contacts, email and other correspondence.

Main Conclusions

From Table 1 it can be seen that some 25% of the director's time is spent on leadership activities, 72% on management activities and 3% on administration (when preparation and travel time are allowed for, and 33%, 60% and 7% respectively when estimated preparation and travel time are included)

It must be remembered that the *Cooperative Education and Placement Unit* is a new unit – one that took some four years of lobbying to realize. Much of the leadership activities –strategic thinking and persuasion – thus took place prior to the establishment of the Unit. The director clearly has a leadership function to fulfill in order to ensure 'buy-in' and to obtain commitment from the staff she has to work closely with in order to achieve the objectives of the Unit, but over whom she has no authority (from Table 1 25%, of time is spent on leadership activities).

Allocation of 72% of the director's time to management activities suggests that this is indeed a management position. However, as this is a new Unit and the director is the only staff member of the unit, other common management tasks have not been realized – performance management, staff development, staff leave management, delegation to name a

few (this will likely change when an administrative assistant is appointed early in 2003.)

Remarkably, from the analysis reported here, a mere 3% of the activities of the director are administrative in nature. This may be explained as administrative activities were not specifically diarized and allocated time. It may also be that as the director actually had to literally do everything herself, that administration became really closely integrated with the other management functions. This is consistent with the literature which suggests that administration is an aspect of management.

On the recommendation of third party validators of the categories (Step 5), travel and preparation times were estimated and included as a separate column in Table 1 (Time+). The findings that the time allocated to leadership would then be 33% is not likely an accurate reflection. The figures of 25%, 72% and the 3% for leadership, management and administration without including travel and preparation time are deemed to be a more reliable estimate.

Concluding Remarks

Cooperative education as an education model that is most closely associated with the technikon sector has long captured the attention of the writer. The *New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education* (2002) document points to higher education moving more and more towards this mode of education. Should this occur, universities in particular will need to establish units similar to the one this paper reports on (or other modes of program delivery and administration, see, e.g., Coll & Eames, 2000). Hence this report may prove to be of general interest.

The writer's interest in the cooperative model of education, coupled with new inputs and insights gained on leadership, management and administration led to this study being undertaken.

The position of *Director, Cooperative Education and Placement Unit* is graded as a management position. The study seems to confirm this grading with the allocation of 72% of the diarized activities of the director being allocated to management tasks and functions.

From the literature reviewed, management activities cannot be isolated totally from those of leadership and administration. There are clear distinctions in some instances, but a manager usually has to be something of a leader and an administrator in order to be successful and to fulfill his/her role effectively and efficiently.

The analysis presented in this paper suggests that in the case of Technikon Witwatersrand for director of *Cooperative Education and Placement Unit*, the main focus of the everyday activities in the first 100 days in office is on management tasks (72%), but also indicates a clear leadership requirement (25%).

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