



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES OF DEPARTMENT CHAIRS AT A POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION IN WESTERN IN CANADA: A CASE STUDY

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Leadership is one of the most essential determinants of success in organizations. Strong and adaptable leadership is particularly important in postsecondary settings due to an increasingly complex and dynamic social, economic and policy context. There is no literature concerning department chairs originating in western Canada, and what is available, predominantly from the United States, indicates that most postsecondary intuitions do not provide formal training to department chairs. This area of research is important because the actions of department chairs can dramatically affect a university's effectiveness and productivity.

The study explores how faculty members in the role of department chair at a publicly funded Canadian university experience leadership development. It also examines department heads' perceptions about the efficacy of leadership development programs available to them. The epistemological stance that guides the study is constructionism, which recognizes that knowledge is uniquely constructed by each individual and that learning is contextual and occurs through creative experimentation. A case study design is being used and interviews with faculty members who are currently in the role of department chair will be conducted until saturation is reached.

The main research question will ask: What experiences of department chairs were the most helpful to learning what the role entailed?

The findings of the study will inform the kinds of leadership development programs that would be most helpful to faculty currently in the department chair role and to those aspiring to accept these appointments in the future. The research also seeks to gain insights and offer a set of recommendations for new leadership development programs, or adjustments to programs already available. The study will contribute to the academic leadership literature by exploring the leadership development experiences of department chairs at a postsecondary institution in western Canada.

Keywords: Leadership development, Department chair, Postsecondary leadership, Academic leadership.