

# ON BECOMING A LEADER: CATANDUANES STATE UNIVERSITY IN ITS FRAME

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## ABSTRACT

*This study employed qualitative research, which comprised semi-structured interviews with the academic leaders of Catanduanes State University to determine the leadership frame of the institution. Using content analysis to code the leadership frame guided by the four leadership frames of Bolman and Deal and narratives on the seven factors of academic leadership model of Ramsden, it revealed that the institution exhibited effective leadership on the following characteristics namely: leadership in teaching and research, strategic vision and networking, collaborative and motivational leadership, fair and efficient management, development and recognition of performance and interpersonal skills. Also, the leadership frame in the institution is mainly governed by human resource and structural frame. Further work is recommended to utilize two theories in this study in identifying and comparing leadership frames in private and public universities in the Bicol Region. Given this importance, the findings of this study would be able to provide a broader landscape in terms of leadership in the academe.*

**Keywords:** Leadership Frame, Catanduanes State University, Human Resource Frame, Structural Frame.

## INTRODUCTION

Leadership is one of the critical aspects of organizational studies. It is a determinant of organizational success. In the first place, it is crucial to define the concept of leadership in general and in particular, in the academic setting and more specifically, leadership in higher education institutions (HEIs). Leadership is one of the most widely discoursed and researched issues. As one of the trends in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has been characterized by a variety of definitions, frameworks, structure and meaning. Generally, according to Nye (2008), leadership has three fundamental aspects, namely leaders, followers and context. It is a means of enhancing human potential (Bijur, 2000). In addition, Astin & Astin (2000) defined leadership as a means to influence others to accomplish specific assigned tasks and responsibilities, and thus it gives the ability to transform and influence people, and the society as a whole. Hoy & Miskel (2001) also defined leadership as the ability to support and enable a group of people to accomplish a common task.

There is a growing interest in the leadership roles within the academic setting, particularly in higher education institutions (HEIs) across the different countries in the world. Therefore, despite the different global challenges and the changing landscape of education, adaptation to these new circumstances is needed inasmuch as to the consideration of the theories and practicalities of the different leadership frameworks. In a more specific setting in the academic and higher education institutions, there has been several theories, models and frameworks in terms of academic leadership but there is still no consensus in the definition of leadership at present. Rather it is an emerging trend based on the context of an organization (Black, 2015).

This qualitative study underpins the model of Ramsden (1998) and the four-frame model of Bolman & Deal (2003). University President, and with the help of Vice Presidents in the higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines are the ones who lead effort and great contribution in helping the University grow and respond to the changes in the academic society. Catanduanes State University is the only island University in the province responding to significant trends issues and changes such as International Standardization for Organization (ISO), program accreditation, calendar shift, K-12 program and new program offerings, to name a few. The University is a great provider of the human resource not only on the island but to the whole country and the global landscape. Therefore, there is a greater need to employ multi-faceted leadership frames and academic leadership factors. This research anticipates to filling the gap found in the prevailing research and literature on leadership frames, specifically in the province.

The objective of this study is to identify leadership frames present in the institution guided by the framework of (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Ramsden, 1998).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Leadership Viewpoints in Educational Contexts

Leadership matters and is changing from time to time (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). However, recent studies amalgamate new trends in the global educational landscape and utilizing traditional leadership styles. Still, some accepted framework and theories of leadership and were used today were the command and control (Macdonald, 1998), behavioral (Herzberg, 1976), transactional-transformational (Bass & Avolio, 1997), transformational (Tourish, 2008) and systems thinking (Seddon, 2003).

Amanchukwu et al. (2015) concludes that successful leadership could be realized if the application of the leadership styles, principles and methods should be appropriately and completely applied in school management because quality educational leadership tradition deals great opportunity to further improve educational leadership and management policies and practices by accepting and using the basic and fundamental principles and styles on educational leadership. This study gave birth to multiple leadership frames and styles and shared leadership or utilizing two or more leadership styles in one organization.

Leadership style has a big potential influence on organizations, particularly in the higher education institutions that it should be considered extreme in all aspects of organizational behavior (Amedome, 2018). Therefore, administrators use different organizational perspectives, or "*frames*," to help them understand situations, problems, and day-to-day activities. In higher education, four of such frames have been identified as bureaucratic, collegial, political, and symbolic, according to Bensimon (1989). Leadership frames are also directly correlated with job satisfaction and performance of employees (Shirbagi, 2007).

Harman, (2002) explored the changing roles and personal characteristics of deans of faculties and heads of academic departments in Australian higher education institutions with over twenty years of study. While deans and heads continued to be academics with superior qualifications and impressive research achievements, the gap between the research records of deans/heads and other academics narrowed, but the gap between deans/heads and professors widened. The study of (Almaki et al., 2016) also found that leadership is strongly linked with vision and goal setting, accountability, role model, engorgement, and empowerment.

## Utilizing Leadership Frames

Leadership frameworks such as Bolman & Deal (2003) is a multi-frame leadership theory, in which leaders possesses not only one frame but three or more of the four frames of leadership namely: structural, human resource, political and symbolic. The model of Ramsden (1998) exemplifies that for the academic institutions to be operative, leaders must underpin several factors and characteristics. These are leadership in teaching, leadership in research, strategic vision and networking, collaborative and motivational leadership, fair and efficient management, development and recognition of performance and interpersonal skills.

In Ramsden's model, leadership in teaching would be elaborately referring to bringing new ideas, innovations about teaching and creating excitement on teaching. Inspiring researchers in the institution could evidence research leadership. In addition, research is one of the functions of the University and should be of focus and importance. Thus, the significance of both instruction and research is stated by Brew & Lucas (2009) that institutions should embrace both instruction and research as an indispensable function – and to integrate other elements of the mission of the universities. Collaborative and motivational leadership is established among others by honesty, integrity and openness. Fair and efficient management is evidenced by designation, highly organized working culture of the department and getting things done with little resistance of the subordinates. Developing and recognition of performance includes aspects such as praising and sustaining the success of the staff of the department and giving good feedback and useful negative feedback for improvement. Interpersonal skills refer to communicating well and having concern for others.

Utilizing the framework of Bolman & Deal (2003), the study of Tan et al. (2015) revealed that leaders exhibited three frames, showing multi-frame leadership frames which reflects that the leaders has an effective leadership frame and a high level of cognitive ability, which is important in organizational success. According to Bolman & Deal (2003), the structural frame emphasizes goals and efficiency. It assumes that leaders operate by defining clear and established goals. The human resource frame focuses attention on human needs and assumes that organizations that meet basic needs works better than those that do not. The political frame assumes that organizations are coalitions composed of individuals and interest groups competing for scarce resources. The symbolic frame sees a chaotic world in which meaning and predictability are social creations and facts are interpretative rather than objective.

The framework of Bolman & Deal (2003) was also utilized in the study of McArdle (2008) in order to determine (a) the usage of leadership frames from both groups; presidents and their administrative teams, (b) if gender or years of experience in their current positions were factors in leadership frame usage in each group, and (c) if there was a relationship between a president's frame usage and the frame usage of the members of the direct report team, but in a quantitative manner.

The study of Sathye (2004) reported and documented analysis of responses of three leaders in a tertiary institution in Australia. An interview schedule was prepared to obtain responses from the leaders on various aspects of leadership, which were examined in the context of the conceptual framework of leadership in higher education developed by Ramsden (1998). It was found out that the responses of the three leaders were close to the theoretical model of Ramsden in many aspects. However, some differences were found in the style of leadership of the three leaders. The study finds that academic leadership poses problems that are distinctly different than leadership in business or government agencies. Academic leaders need to stay close to teaching, learning, research and scholarship to bring out the best among academics. The

study could help leaders in tertiary institutions to reflect on their qualities as academic leaders, and such reflection may help improve their leadership frame to achieve positive outcomes.

A similar study was conducted by Vuori (2011) to examine and recognize the leadership orientations of several program directors. Using reframing theory as a conceptual framework of the study, research question was posed which guided the analysis. The problem was

*“Do the program directors use the four leadership frames presented in the reframing theory and how do they use them and how do they use them to frame change?”*

The emphasis on multi-framing leadership might be one of the solutions to support the University’s capacities for change.

Another study of Beck-Frazier et al. (2007) investigated the leadership behavior of academic deans of institutions that addresses a vital aspect of leadership – leadership is created when there is congruence between the organizational leadership behaviors needed by the institution and the leadership behaviors exhibited by the organizational leader. The study found out that leadership in higher education is critical and multidimensional.

Using a qualitative approach, the study of Hamidifar & Ebrahimi (2016) explored current academic leadership as well as challenges within Iran’s private higher educational institutions (HEIs). These are (i) setting of direction, (ii) organizational and (iii) staff development at three administrative levels: central office, branch office and faculty personnel. Obstacles confronting effective academic leadership were identified such as (i) centralization of power; (ii) bureaucratic hierarchy; (iii) budgetary restraints; (iv) weak interaction including incompetent communications as well as political, social and cultural interferences; and (v) unqualified staffing rules and regulations that prevented meritocracy. The study revealed that the practical purview of an effective academic leader is to drive an institution’s mission and vision forward towards achievement and define its mission and objectives. Moreover, it means a crucial need for academic leadership development programs that integrate, keep and sustain scientific management skills based on sound moral values, reciprocally established belief, respect, and the application of transactional cum transformational governance methods in instruction, learning and research.

Although there have been other more recent and well-known approaches to the measurement of leadership style, others just combine and create from the traditional theory, Bolman & Deal (2003) and Ramsden (1998) is still most widely used today as a leadership theory. Thus, this study will utilize the two leadership frameworks.

## METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study was conducted utilizing semi-structured interview questions. The participants of the study were the academic leaders of Catanduanes State University, namely: University President, the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VP-AA), Vice President for Research, Extension and Production Affairs (VP-REPA) and Vice President for Administrative and Financial Affairs (VP-AFA). They have a strong academic background and impressive contribution to the institution. Catanduanes State University is located on the island of Catanduanes, Philippines. The objective of the study was to determine the leadership frame of the institution. To facilitate the interview and to obtain the responses of the academic leaders, set of questions were made, and letter request were made approved and interview schedule were set. First-hand knowledge and personal experiences were obtained through the participant’s

responses for the period April to November 2019. The qualitative research interview seeks to describe and the meanings of dominant themes in the life world of the participants. The main task in interviewing is to understand the connotation of what the interviewees say, and therefore narratives were used as primary data (Kvale, 1994). Interviews allowed themselves to share their understanding regarding leadership and its value to higher education institutions.

Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can gather in-depth information around the topic, in this study would refer to the leadership frame. Interviews may be convenient as follow-up to certain participants of the study to questionnaires, e.g., to further investigate their responses (McNamarra, 1999). Hence, four participants in the study were selected to triangulate the findings (Merriam, 1998). The use of the interview guide also provided the researcher with more structure and ease of organizing and analyzing the interview data.

In this study, data were analyzed by using the four leadership frames of Bolman and Deal (2003) and the seven factors of academic leadership model of Ramsden (1998). The purpose of the study was to identify the kind of leadership frame the four leaders are exhibiting, and the institution itself, in general. At the first level of data analysis, all the interviews were recorded with the informant's consent and were transcribed verbatim. Then it was checked and edited by the participant's themselves, which allowed and provided clearer and richer responses. At the second level, responses were coded to identify the leadership frame. This coding system allowed the researcher to make a reliable judgment on the participants. At the third level, codes were identified as to the belongingness of the themes, specifically the leadership frames of Bolman & Deal (2003). The coding system allowed the researcher to discover patterns among interview responses and to match the codes and themes effectively.

The study is a qualitative type, and in order to employ trustworthiness, triangulation, member checks and researcher's bias were considered. Since the study focuses on the leadership frame of the University, multiple sources of data were extracted from the participants. In addition, raw data were also returned to the participant in order for them to review and ensure accuracy of the responses together with a signed consent and permission. To avoid researcher's bias, the researcher carefully examined and scrutinize the results inasmuch as possible, to minimize the bias of conducting research where the researcher is affiliated.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The main participants of this study were the four main leaders of Catanduanes State University. They have a strong academic background and impressive contribution to the institution. Interviews allowed themselves to share their understanding regarding leadership and its value to higher education institutions.

### **Profile of the Participants**

Leader 1 (L1) and Leader 4 (L4) has been in the current leadership role for about eight (8) years. Leader 2 (L2) has been in the position for three years while Leader 3 (L3) is on its second year. All of their roles are in a higher position in the University. In addition, all of them had become Directors, Deans, Principals and heads of department in their previous positions.

## Leadership in Teaching

L1 mentioned:

*“In (terms of) teaching, it is leveling yourself to the level of the students and pushing them higher than what they want to be. It is a continuous motivation and letting them feel that they can do better with whatever they set on their minds. They can do it through hardworking and capacitating themselves. I guess for teachers like me; it is walking the talk, especially in terms of values. You let the students feel that they are important, then, they will feel that they are important too, and they will strive to be a better person. Thinking to be a better person will give them encouragement and motivation to reach their goal. Letting them feel that they are important, letting them feel that there is always hope, they can reach their stars, they can be the best version of themselves and that they can help their family and that they can be an asset in the community.”*

L2 believed that:

*“To be an effective leader in teaching and research, you have to perform actual teaching and research functions with commitment and compassion, and at the same time, you are an administrator. In short, be a role model and be passionate about it.”*

L3 also thought that:

*“Teaching is done in such a way that you have to be with your people. You should know your students very well and able to set attainable standards.”*

In addition, L4 also said that:

*“In terms of teaching, and at the same time you are an administrative official, time management is important”.*

The responses above shows that an effective leader in teaching is definitely levelling yourself to the level of students with commitment and compassion by setting attainable standards. This supports to the theory that a leader in terms of teaching brings new ideas, setting attainable standards and creating excitement to students.

## Leadership in Research

In terms of leadership in research, L1 replied that:

*“It’s showing to them that you are also a researcher and an innovator. Research indeed is the lifeblood of the University. To improve the research endeavors of the University, then guiding them, providing them with all the opportunities, capacitating them and mentoring them in research and publication is essential. It is important for the improvement of the discipline that responds to local, national and global societal issues and concerns. Funding support to research and looking for partners in research undertaking, including incentives is also vital.”*

L2 also mentioned research that despite the designation and actual teaching load, L2 see to it that she is into research also. To cope with all of these, L2 did tandem research activities in which along the process, enable both of them to learn from each other. L3 also argued that research is a high-level thing that only a few are chosen to do it. L3 tried to look at the different rules and regulations in terms of research endeavors in the institution, and L3 also wants to make clear of all the grey areas in research. In addition, L4 responded that research is an important

thing in the University and the division L4 is working with will support along with the research endeavors of the institution.

Theory tells us that leadership in teaching should be done by mentoring and leading by example. In addition, inspiring and mentoring researchers in the University is the true characteristic of a leader. Leaders should also have the ability to conduct researches in his/her discipline. In addition, research should be an active task of an academic leader. All of the participants in the study had engaged in multiple research activities such as being a research professor, adviser, panel members and consultants. Moreover, several of their studies has also published and cited in academic journals.

### **Strategy, Vision and Networking**

In terms of short-term and long-term vision of the participants, L1 noted that:

*“For the short-term vision, it is to accomplish the performance indicators mandated from us, set by the governing bodies and complying with the statutory requirements.”*

*“In terms of the long term vision, it is for the University to have that brand, find its own strength, find its own niche, responsive to the needs of the society but still looking into the performance indicators of the international performing universities like research centers that will define the strengths of the University...topics and concerns that are felt locally, considering local issues, disaster and climate change, felt by other people in others countries. We join them by solving these issues or problems and concerns alleviating their plight, alleviating the plight of the local people. Therefore, we will be known in that particular field, and we will be relevant to the rest of the world. We will define and realize both the teaching and research agenda of the University.”*

L2 also noted in her response:

*“In terms of short-term vision, it is to capacitate all the personnel of the division with the relevant competencies demanded by the fast-changing time. This will enable them to contribute productively in carrying out the mandate of the University, always guided by quality and excellence.”*

*“My long-term vision for the University...to be at par with the top-performing universities not only in the ASEAN region but in the world. I dream for the University to have a significant impact on the lives of the people and in the community it serves.”*

L3 shared in her response:

*“To accomplish all the assigned targets of the institution and to gain better performance. My long-term goal is to let the institution become an excellent University comparable to other higher education institutions.”*

L4 also shared in her response:

*“My short-term vision for the University is to continue doing all my functions and responsibilities effectively and efficiently as a support to the academic and research department. Even my personal goals are neglected and compromised; you must do your tasks well in your institution. My long term vision for the University is to sustain its achievement and become comparable with other universities in the country.”*

Theory tells us that strategic vision and networking are demonstrated by setting personal goals and objectives in an institution. All of the leaders have a clear short-term vision and long-term vision in this study. In contrary, one response in the study of Tan et al., (2015) showed contrast in the study which showed a leader with no clear direction for the University. This would not be a characteristic of a true leader, and is not present in the present study.

## Collaborative and Motivational Leadership

L1 specified that:

*“Letting them feel that together we can be a game-changer, and that every achievement is everyone’s effort; everyone has a contribution to whatever is the stature of the University, that we are in one journey, that together we can be strong, that together we can move mountain, that together we can reach our dreams and that together we can move this University to a greater height comparable to the rest of the performing universities.”*

L2 also stated that:

*“A leader is an inspirer, a motivator and one cannot do this if he/she is not inspired or motivated himself/herself. A leader should radiate to your subordinates. As human beings, we need to be appreciated, recognized even with the smallest achievement we contribute to the organization. Sincere praise, a gentle tap at the back, a smile, a warm greeting – all of these would go along the way in performing one’s task.”*

L3 also stated that:

*“I always tap my subordinates showing appreciation to their excellent work.”*

In the same way, L4 said that:

*“What I do first is to tell them the objectives and the role of the Administrative and Financial Affairs. It’s a support to the academic and research division. In addition, that’s the core operation of the University. What I tell to subordinates is that we are here to support the academic and research services. We should also feel a sense of ownership in everything that we do in University.”*

According to the existing theory, a true leader demonstrates honesty, openness and integrity. All of the responses indicated that they have different ways of motivating their subordinates like appreciating others, a gentle tap, cohesiveness and sense of ownership.

## Fair and Efficient Management

L1 indicated that:

*“The flexibilities and the discretionary power should be exercised fairly and with consideration on the greater good and the greater number. With that, you can sleep well.”*

L2 also specified that:

*“Towards fair and effective management, I consider two-way communication to be the most effective tool. There must be objectivity, open-mindedness, humility and transparency. Give credit where it is due.”*

*In addition, you must implement approved policies firmly and with consistency, and of course, they have to be communicated first before they are implemented.”*

L3 also argued that:

*“To be fair, transparency is essential. Besides, you should be humane; there will be no substitute for humans in any institution.”*



In the same way, L4 said that:

*“Just follow the policies, rules and regulations by treating your subordinates as human beings. We should feel a sense of ownership in everything that we do in University.”*

According to the existing theory, leaders demonstrate fair and effective management by being highly organized. This implies that in their responses, every activities, decisions and action made should be guided by the mandate, policies, rules and regulations set by the University and the government. It is ensuring that rules are observed and that nobody is above the law.

## **Development and Recognition of Performance**

L1 answered that:

*“Human resources are really important. Yes, it’s the core of the organization. It’s the most important resource of the organization that’s why capacitating and developing them are also very essential towards ensuring the sustainable development of the vision set for the University.*

*We are very aggressive in sending our human resource to seminars and training and advanced education. I think you have to look into the record through time as to the number of faculty members we send in advanced education. In the last 2-3 years, we had the highest outgoing faculty members for advanced education, training, seminars and workshops attended. We’re putting our resources into developing our human resources.*

*Give credit to people who are performing well. At the same time, stick to the roadmaps of the University. That’s why we have awards and incentives given to employees. I think it’s the harmony, peace and joy that is felt in the University, trying to settle conflicts through conversations but still guided by the disciplinary policies set by Civil Service Commission (CSC) and other applicable laws and statutory regulations and ethics.”*

L2 also answered:

*“A sincere praise, a gentle tap at the back, a smile, a warm greeting – all of these would go along the way in performing one’s task.”*

L3 shared:

*“In knowing your people, once in a while, you live with them, and at the same time you motivate them.”*

In the same way, L4 said that:

*“Every person is unique, so you have to treat them somewhat different depending on the situations. You should consider individual differences. They said there are so many types of leadership, but we really cannot choose one type of leadership but a combination of those types.”*

According to the existing theory, honest feedback, sustaining interest and rewarding performance is important of being a leader. All of them demonstrated these qualities in order to achieve the desired goals of the institution.

## **Interpersonal Skills**

L1 shared that:

*“I might have a natural flair for some things. I am friendly, but there are certain things that I am more comfortable at a distance because I still believe that it’s hard to impart discipline. I’m not so sure, I think it would*

*be shown during meetings, sometimes, I can be too frank, and at the same time, I want them to feel that I'm just doing my job. It's both personal and professional at the same time. I don't want to talk too comfortably."*

L2 also answered:

*"Posted on my door's office is a message claiming that the office is client-friendly. This likewise applies outside and beyond my office. Perhaps I consider my interpersonal skills as one of my strengths and my special tool which enables me to gain the support and cooperation of my colleagues in almost all the academic undertakings the University has engaged in."*

L3 shared:

*"I let myself available to others if they have some concerns. You just ask. In fact, there are so many clients and employees who visit my office. It's a way of leading people like treating your own family. If my subordinate cannot understand the task, I let them know. It's also owning them and let them feel that they are part of the organization."*

In the same way, L4 said that:

*"I am friendly but frank in a way that my colleague won't be offended."*

According to the existing theory, communication and having concern for others is the key interpersonal skills in leaders. It would be demonstrated in their responses that they have good and positive interpersonal skills.

## Leadership Frames

Content analysis of the four leadership frames was used in this study to allow quantitative results. Content analysis is a beneficial tool in qualitative research because it allows the researcher to code several themes based on the existing theory and to simplify and reduce lumps of data. In the coding analysis, Table 1 shows the occurrences of the quotes matching the codes.

Frame	L	L	L	L
	1	2	3	4
Human Resource	5	3	2	1
Political	1	1	1	1
Structural	6	3	2	2
Symbolic	1	1	1	1

Note: L stands for leader or participant in this study while the number stands for the numerical code of the participant

From the data analysis presented in the table above, it would be noted that that leadership frame of the institution is governed mainly by the human resource and structural frame. Although, all the frames of leadership were exhibited, two of these frames effectively lead the organization.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Academic leadership is distinct to other leadership frameworks such as in politics, business and other private organizations. The present study showed that all of the academic

leaders exhibited effective leadership characteristics namely: leadership in teaching and research, strategic vision and networking, collaborative and motivational leadership, fair and efficient management, development and recognition of performance and interpersonal skills.

Along with the theory of Bolman & Deal, it is concluded that the leadership frame in Catanduanes State University is mainly governed by human resource and structural frame. This is similar to the result of the study of Tan et al., (2015), which also showed the same results. The structural frame is recognized in the long-term and short-term goals-focused, being able to follow the rules and regulations, efficiency and effectiveness in resolving conflicts and handling of power governed by rules and regulations. In addition, the human resource frame is recognized on the leaders that they value human relationships. All of them show concern for their subordinates, motivates them, mentor them and be able to support them. They are sensitive to the employee's feelings and needs. This frame refers to how an organization provides human needs, improve performance, rewards and incentives towards building camaraderie, teamwork, interpersonal relationships and group dynamics.

Further work is recommended to utilize two theories in this study in identifying and comparing leadership frames in private and public universities in the Bicol Region. Given this importance, the findings of this study would be able to provide a broader landscape in terms of leadership in the academe.

### DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

In this study, the four leadership frames of Bolman & Deal (2003) and the seven factors of academic leadership model of Ramsden (1998) were used as an analytical tool selected by the researcher. Utilizing these frameworks, the researcher is making some associations to examine the leadership framework of the academic leaders in the only State University in the Province of Catanduanes.

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