What Might We Learn From 25 Years of Research on Education Deans?

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Abstract

This article provides a retrospective account of 25 years of qualitative and quantitative inquiry into the psychological characteristics, leadership strategies, and attributes that education deans bring to their positions and the contextual factors that contribute to their staying power. Over multiple, mixed-methods studies, some 423 education deans shared their views through interviews, vignette responses, situational self-analyses, and surveys. The main results indicated that a mature ego is at the centerpiece of effective leadership, allowing deans to invoke different dimensions of their leadership to adapt proficiently to their professional environment. Their professional identities, attributes, and capacities, stemming from their mature ego, contributed to job satisfaction and longevity. Relevant professional development arose as worth considering.

Keywords: *Deans; Leadership; Self-Reflection; Professional Development; Longevity*

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Introduction

Education deans are responsible for leading their schools and colleges, most especially for the success of their educator preparation programs. With unprecedented demands to demonstrate financial solvency, program quality and growth, as well as student satisfaction and competency and even community engagement, education deans need to be psychologically. emotionally, and socially equipped to handle the formidable pressure of internal and external accountability. To lead their teacher education programs to viability and excellence, education deans also need to have the personal attributes and staying power to function effectively (Wepner, Wilhite, & D'Onofrio, 2003).

In practice, the average term of service of education deans is 4.5 years (Butin, 2016; Gmelch et al., 1999; Gmelch et al., 2011; Greicar, 2009; Robbins & Schmitt, 1994), which is reportedly the highest turnover rate of executive leaders in higher education (Higher Education Publications, 2018). Insights from education deans' self-reported perspectives about the strategies and skills that they use to function in the job can help to identify individual and institutional characteristics that are critical for success and survival in the position. This assertion has been the basis for the substantial research agenda recounted here.

More specifically, the purpose of this article is to provide a retrospective account of 25 years of qualitative and quantitative inquiry into the psychological characteristics, leadership strategies, and attributes that education deans bring to their positions and the contextual factors that contribute to their staying power. There were four phases to the research conducted: dimensions of leadership, characteristics and practices, essential factors for success, and longevity in the role.

Education Deans' Roles and Responsibilities

Education deans are expected to be skilled academic administrators and accomplished scholars in their disciplines, but also uniquely thoughtful collaborators with P-12 and higher education colleagues (King & Hampel, 2018). Additionally, in adhering to state and national standards, they must provide concrete evidence of how their programs prepare teacher and educational leadership candidates to exert a direct, positive influence on P-12 students' learning and achievement (Coll et al., 2018; Henk et al., 2017).

On a daily basis, education deans must balance individual, institutional, community, and societal needs with their own needs. They need a strong sense of professional identity to self-evaluate how decisions impact their faculty, students, administrative colleagues, and staff because they affect the quality of life of their institutions (Wepner et al., 2008). Like all academic deans, leaders of education schools and colleges bear ultimate responsibility for all internal matters, most notably budgets, curriculum and program development, faculty and staff hiring and performance, and student success.

However, education deans, by virtue of the very nature of their academic units, are expected to

be outwardly focused as well. That is, they are expected to develop effective partnerships with schools, community agencies, and not-for-profit and for-profit organizations (Boyd 2008; Bruess et al., 2003; Hartley & Kecskemethy, 2008; Wimpelberg, 2009). As academic facilitators and intermediaries between trustees, presidents, chief academic officers, faculty, administrative staff, and students, education deans need to work successfully with individuals and groups possessing a vested interest in schooling to promote the mission of their academic units and sincerely and meaningfully assist their external stakeholders (Dill, 1980; Gmelch, 2002; Gould, 1983; Kerr, 1998; McCarty & Reyes, 1987; McGannon, 1987; Morris, 1981; Morsink, 1987; Rosser, Johnsrud, & Heck, 2003; Salmen, 1971; Zimpher, 1995).

Moreover, education deans must be strategic thinkers and leaders who help their schools and colleges to flourish by inspiring and mobilizing stakeholders (Thomas & Fragueiro, 2011). They need to know how to move "a wide range of highly complex puzzle pieces around in real time with the foreknowledge that the implications could resonate for years or even decades" (Butin, 2016, p. 17). To do so, they should be skilled at weighing the evidence to make quick decisions and, at the same time, have the capacity to compromise on policies, programs, and practices related to every possible aspect of their academic unit (Butin, 2016). They are expected to manage both up and down by engaging regularly with senior officials, faculty, staff, and students (June, 2014). Furthermore, they need to combine an academic orientation with a business orientation, so that they embrace and incorporate the multiple perspectives of their stakeholders into tactical initiatives that expand and diversify their units through increased resources and opportunities. Their ability to interact, collaborate, and negotiate with those with whom they work often determines the success of their efforts (Butin, 2016). In effect, education deans need to believe in the people they lead and appreciate the value of positive relationships, effective teams, and shared responsibilities as critical pathways to important accomplishments (Batch & Heyliger, 2014; Wasicsko & Balch, 2014; Wepner & Henk, 2020; Wiley, 2013).

Impetus for Research

The multidimensional demands and expectations placed upon education deans could contribute to what is referred to as a "revolving door syndrome" of 4.5 years in a single appointment (Robbins & Schmitt, 1994). Also important to consider is the notion that effective functioning has as much to do with interpersonal competence as technical competence. Many education deans with stellar professional records have been pushed out of their positions, not realizing that there must have been a disconnect between what they believed about themselves and their role and what their constituencies wanted and expected. They did not seem sufficiently aware of the consequences of their actions on others and had not reflected on ways their values and goals were affecting their work environments. This discovery prompted the researchers contributing to the body of knowledge represented here to try to further ferret out why some deans were successful and others were not. It seemed valuable as a first step to learn from veteran deans who had survived in their positions. Their thoughts about themselves and their problem-solving strategies in relation to others could help to inform the field (Wepner, Wilhite & D'Onofrio, 2011).

Four Phases of Research

The evolution of the work over the course of the 25 years witnessed the emergence of four different phases of searching for answers about education deans' thought processes, their problem-solving strategies, their characteristics, practices, and values, as well as factors that keep them doing what they are doing. The first two phases of the research were qualitative, with a questionnaire, interviews, case studies, vignettes, and self-analyses of meetings and daily practices used as the primary methods of data collection. The third phase of the research was both qualitative and quantitative. It began with a qualitative self-analysis of meetings and ended with two quantitative studies, based on the qualitative findings from phase 3, that involved surveys as the primary methods of data collection. The fourth phase of the research was both qualitative and quantitative. It began with a qualitative study of narrative responses to an online questionnaire and ended with a quantitative study that involved a survey, based on the findings from the qualitative study in phase 4, as the primary methods of data collection.

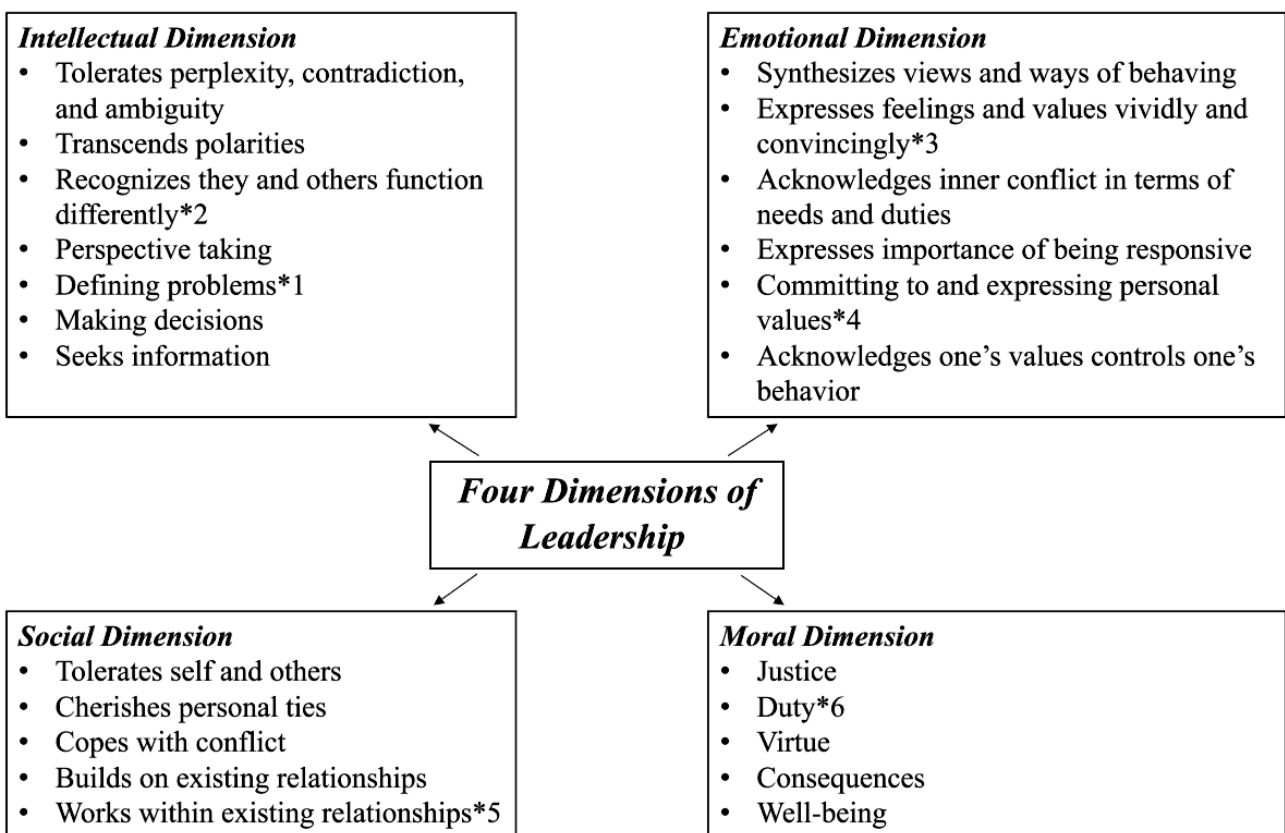### Phase 1: Four Dimensions of Leadership

The first phase, which took place between 1997 and 2006, involved 27 deans who were interviewed by three researchers. The deans had been in their positions for at least 6 to 7 years, indicating that they had avoided the revolving door syndrome. It was assumed that these longer serving deans had learned how to exercise their leadership with confidence and in a way that was compatible with their institutions. The deans, reflecting a gender and racial balance, came from small, midsized, and large public and private universities alike. They were selected because of their reputations as effective administrators and their visibility in national and regional leadership roles.

Interviews were used for the first two years of the study to learn about 12 deans' problem-solving strategies and reflections about their careers as deans. Deans were asked to respond to a 17-item questionnaire about their background (e.g., What is it in your family background that motivated you?), problem-solving strategies (e.g., How do you give up power without losing control?), and their reflections and values about their leadership style in relation to their sense of self (e.g., What do you value most in your faculty?) (Wepner, D'Onofrio, Willis, & Wilhite, 2003). A combination of axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) led to the emergence of 11 themes that became the first iteration of a conceptual model with four dimensions: intellectual, emotional, social, and moral. The model was related to Loevinger's (1976) theory of ego development, which stressed the interconnectedness of cognitive, moral, social, and emotional development as one develops a self-aware self-concept.

Vignettes were used for the next five years with 15 deans. These vignettes, which simulated the complexity of real-life problems in a school or college of education, prompted deans to think aloud about ways in which they would frame, ponder, and solve problems with intellectual, emotional, social, and moral implications. One vignette, for example, asked the deans to think about what they would do if a highly regarded faculty member was displaying hostile and unprofessional behavior as a result of a brain tumor (Wepner, Wilhite, &

D'Onofrio, 2003). Transcripts of the deans' tape-recorded responses to the vignettes were coded according to the emergent conceptual model of four dimensions of leadership with 24 themes that had evolved from each of the deans' unique responses to the vignettes in previous studies. Figure 1 captures the leadership model that came to light.

Figure 1
Four Dimensions of Leadership

Intellectual Dimension
- Tolerates perplexity, contradiction, and ambiguity
- Transcends polarities
- Recognizes they and others function differently*2
- Perspective taking
- Defining problems*1
- Making decisions
- Seeks information

Emotional Dimension
- Synthesizes views and ways of behaving
- Expresses feelings and values vividly and convincingly*3
- Acknowledges inner conflict in terms of needs and duties
- Expresses importance of being responsive
- Committing to and expressing personal values*4
- Acknowledges one's values controls one's behavior

Four Dimensions of Leadership

Social Dimension
- Tolerates self and others
- Cherishes personal ties
- Copes with conflict
- Builds on existing relationships
- Works within existing relationships*5

Moral Dimension
- Justice
- Duty*6
- Virtue
- Consequences
- Well-being

*Most frequently used themes

Note. Adapted from "The Leadership Dimensions of Education Deans," by S. B. Wepner, A D'Onofrio, and S. C. Wilhite, 2008 *Journal of Teacher Education,* 59, pp. 159-160.

All deans used each of the four dimensions when responding to vignettes; however, the intellectual dimension was used most frequently followed by the emotional dimension. The

analysis indicated that deans tend to define problems in intellectual terms and are grounded in the reality that they and others function differently. They call into play different emotional considerations such as a finely tuned sense of appreciation of others and an ability to express feelings and values vividly and convincingly. They anchor their understanding of problems by answering to their social and moral contexts, specifically considering the importance of interpersonal relationships and organizational responsibilities. This phase of the research found that education deans are strategists in that they define problems, know to work within existing relationships, and have a sense of duty to their role and their institution. Yet, they are aware of the importance of emotion as they make decisions. These findings were consistent with the notion that the construct of mature ego integrates all four dimensions and knows when to depend on one over the other (Loevinger, 1976)**.**

Phase 1 focused on looking at deans' skills, attitudes, and dispositions through a psychological lens of professional self-concept and professional identities for serving in such a role. The model that was developed and tested provided a framework for looking at the way deans differentiate and integrate intellectual, emotional, social, and moral attributes. The model provided a useful framework for encouraging deans to reflect on personal qualities that may be related to their effectiveness in their roles (Wepner et al., 2004; 2008; Wepner, D'Onofrio, Willis, & Wilhite, 2002; 2003; Wepner, Wilhite, & D'Onofrio, 2002).

Phase 2: Characteristics and Practices of Education Deans
The second phase, which took place between 2007 and 2012, involved a total of six deans. The research from Phase 1 led the six deans (one dean had been part of Phase 1) to self-study their own leadership practices and patterns of behavior through case studies, vignettes, meetings, and daily practices. Because these six deans had served as deans for at least six years, they too had met the threshold of having avoided the revolving door syndrome. These six deans began this series of studies with the understanding that, like most deans, they had learned on the job. As with the deans from Phase 1, these deans had previous leadership experience in higher education as chairpersons, assistant deans, and/or associate deans, but none had formal leadership preparation for becoming a dean (Wepner, Hopkins, Johnson, & Damico, 2011).

In conducting the studies, they subscribed to Eisner's connoisseurship model (1991, 1998) as a theoretical framework that speaks to the idea that someone with enough experience can become a connoisseur and critic of their own work. Such an individual can perceive patterns, make interpretations about the subtle and not-so-subtle aspects of a situation, and critique the same situation to help others see the same qualities. Eisner's model supports the idea of a continuing exploration of self and others by reflecting about actions and making informed judgments.

The original phase 2 group of four female deans, representing private and public, small, mid-sized, and large universities, developed and analyzed four case studies, or detailed examinations, about special initiatives that they had created at their institutions (e.g., an assistive technology lab and a doctoral program). Axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) revealed four overarching themes: vision, interpersonal/negotiating skills, managerial skills, and confidence.

Subsequently, a total of four education deans (three females from the original group and one new male dean), again representing private and public, small, mid-sized, and large universities, extended the study to ascertain which of the four themes predominated by writing and analyzing 20 vignettes (five for each dean) about firsthand experiences that they had during their deanships. Each vignette included the impetus for exploring the idea, ways in which they involved others, processes that they used to initiate and implement an idea, issues that emerged, and ways for sustaining the momentum. Vignettes focused on program development, special initiatives, personnel, accreditation, and external relations.

Axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) revealed that *interpersonal/negotiating skills* were used most frequently with four key themes: 1) work closely with people inside and outside the organization (the most prevalent theme); 2) negotiate key players' responsibilities to keep them appropriately involved; 3) be responsive to critical people in the overall organization; and 4) keep critical persons in the organization informed so as to support resource needs.
The same four deans conducted a second self-study to further test these findings by examining daily interpersonal/negotiating behaviors and strategies (Wepner et al., 2014). For two weeks, the deans listed, described, and reflected on all scheduled and unscheduled meetings, events, discussions, and actions. Analysis of these eight weeks (two per dean) revealed that they depended on the same four themes and, as with the previous study, indicated that they most frequently worked closely with others followed by their responsiveness to key persons in their institutions. Figure 2 details the themes that were identified. As it turned out, the deans noted interactions with 35 different types of colleagues (e.g., faculty, university attorney, or donor) for a range of 32 different purposes (e.g., accreditation, program revision, or problems with student performance).

Figure 2
Characteristics and Themes Identified and Used with Case Studies

Characteristic 1: Vision
- Theme 1: Vision created that fit our contexts and was realized incrementally
- Theme 2: Enable the concept to grow beyond our own vision
- Theme 3: Re-vision the concept as it evolves
- Theme 4: Tap resources

Characteristic 2: Interpersonal/Negotiating Skills
- Theme 5: Responsive to critical persons in the overall organization*2
- Theme 6: Work closely with key persons within the unit (school, college, or department) and outside the organization*1
- Theme 7: Keep critical persons in the organization informed so that they were willing to support resource needs*4
- Theme 8: Negotiate key players' roles and responsibilities to keep them appropriately involved, aware of and respectful of boundaries, and honest about their level of participation and contributions to partnership*3

Characteristic 3: Managerial Skills
- Theme 9: Negotiate between groups
- Theme 10: Take charge of daily challenges*5
- Theme 11: Keep the concept alive

Characteristic 4: Confidence
- Theme 12: Do our homework
- Theme 13: Handle criticism from others
- Theme 14: Have enough confidence to accept disappointments and use them to regroup

*Most frequently used themes

Note. Adapted from "Outlasting the Revolving Door: Resiliency in the Deanship," by S. B. Wepner, D. Hopkins, V. C. Johnson, and S. B. Damico, 2012, *Journal of Higher Education Management,* 27, p. 6.

The deans concluded that, while their jobs are individually nuanced because of the nature, structure, challenges, and culture of their institutions, they all nevertheless spent most of their time working closely with others so that they could find common ground to move people and projects forward. With Eisner's model as a backdrop to these Phase 2 studies, the deans recommended the need for professionals in such roles to gain experience in focusing on and self-reflecting about the importance of working with different types of stakeholders to help succeed in the deanship (Wepner, Clark Johnson, Henk, & Lovell, 2013; Wepner, Henk, Clark Johnson, & Lovell, 2014; Wepner, Hopkins, Clark Johnson, & Damico, 2012).

Phase 3: Essential Factors for Succeeding as Deans
The third phase, which took place between 2013 and 2017, involved three deans for another self-study (all from Phase 2) and 209 deans for the two national surveys (110 for the *Deans Performance Belief Survey* and 99 for the *Deans Performance Belief Survey 2*). The three deans, each having served at least 7 years in their current positions, documented their experiences with others during 15 scheduled meetings (5 per dean): six one-on-one, six small group (two to 5 people), and 3 large group (six or more people). For each meeting, the deans charted the purpose/content of the meeting; the people involved; the reporting relationships of those involved in the gathering; the issues/accomplishments that were resolved; unresolved issues; lessons learned from the meeting; and related recommendations.

As with the research in Phase 2, the intent of this first phase 3 study was to analyze the interpersonal/negotiating skills used while working closely with key persons within the unit and outside the organization. In effect, the deans used scheduled meetings with their respective stakeholders to describe what happened, what they learned from these meetings, and what they would recommend to themselves and others for functioning as effectively as possible in such circumstances. Fourteen recommendations emerged that captured what they considered most important for working closely with those who report to them, as well as those to whom they report, and a mixture of other reporting relationships inside and outside their institutions.

Reflection on the 14 major recommendations led the deans to conclude that they spend much of their time facilitating and mediating. For example, one used a one-on-one meeting with the director of teacher education to mediate and thus facilitate a better relationship with the department chair so that they could work together more effectively. The deans depended on intuition, instinct, and experience to accomplish their goals. For example, one dean used the monthly one-on-one meeting with an associate dean to help that person recognize that previous experiences in one position did not necessarily translate into needed skills for the current position. The deans also saw the need to learn how to operate under constraints. For example, faculty governance precludes deans from making arbitrary decisions about faculty tenure and/or promotion or curriculum. Accordingly, the one-on-one meeting that one dean had about a faculty member's future arose after the college's personnel committee determined that the faculty member would not be eligible for tenure.

Even though these deans were in different situations, there were fundamental similarities in how they needed to comport themselves as they worked with other people. These deans believed that they needed to bring their A-game when interacting with others. As administrators in the middle of the higher education institutional hierarchy, they needed to use their interpersonal/negotiating skills to shepherd faculty and administrative staff to subscribe to institutional goals and, at the same time, educate provosts, vice presidents, and presidents about the unique and complex needs of their own schools and colleges (Wepner, Henk, & Lovell, 2015).

The 14 recommendations served as the basis for the distribution of two national surveys (Henk et al., 2017; Wepner, Henk, Lovell, & Anderson, 2020) to seek other education deans' perspectives about important characteristics for effective performance. Statements were written so that there were four items apiece to represent each of the recommendations, resulting in 56 items. For example, for Remain Calm, one survey item was "Maintain your poise in all instances"; for Follow Through, one survey item was "Fulfill the promises you make." For each item, deans were asked to rate how essential each of the statements were for actual, effective performance on the job using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Not Essential to Essential.

Both surveys were hosted by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). AACTE is a nonprofit national alliance of education programs which has as its mission elevating education and educator preparation through research, professional practice, advocacy, and collaboration. The original *Deans Performance Belief Survey* revealed that, while all 14 of the recommendations were considered important, the 110 deans who responded gave the most weight to the importance of *follow through* (Henk et al., 2017).

The *Deans Performance Belief Survey 2* included the original 14 recommendations and 9 additional recommendations (92 total items) that came to light in focus groups with education deans at an AACTE annual conference. This second survey of 99 deans indicated that while *follow through* was important, *honesty* and *advocacy* were given slightly more weight. Overall, the analyses indicated that nearly all 23 scales had definite value, with the scales of *honesty, advocacy, follow through,* and *flexibility* regarded as most essential (Henk et al., 2017). This

wide range of factors represented what education deans felt were necessary to be successful in their roles, not only in the short term, but ostensibly over time as well. Table 1 shows the major recommendations, corresponding sample survey items, and factors considered most essential.

Table 1

Major Recommendations, Corresponding Sample Survey Items, and Factors Considered Most Essential

Major Recommendation	Example Survey Item
Be vigilant	Stay alert to developments that could impact your College or School
Remain calm	Maintain your poise in all instances
Value relationships and others' achievements	Have regard for those in your professional circles
Be strategic	Be planful and stay focused on outcomes
Provide guidance and coaching	Provide guidance to those you encounter in your leadership role
Plan ahead	Organize your thoughts and actions beforehand
Seek help and learn from others	Pursue guidance from individuals within your networks
Solve problems creatively	Use innovation to address challenges
Follow through+	Follow through on commitments
Set limits	Draw the line on how much you commit to do
Trust in yourself	Believe in your judgments and talents
Persist	Stay the course
Be prepared to deal with the consequences of difficult decisions	Ready yourself for pushback on your actions
Don't assume	Don't take too much granted
Be honest*+	Remain upfront with people
Be flexible*+	Adjust to conditions
Communicate extensively*	Keep people well-informed
Be transparent*	Be open in reporting
Have a sense of humor*	Share laughter with others
Be visionary*	Envision opportunities
Advocate for your school or college*+	Champion your school or college
Delegate*	Entrust others to assume major duties
Listen*	Pay attention to what others are saying

*Items added to Survey 2
+Items considered most essential

Note. Adapted from "Education Deans' Ways of Thinking, Being, and Acting: An Expanded National Survey," by S B Wepner, W A Henk, S E Lovell, and R D Anderson, 2020, *Journal of Higher Education Management,* 35, p. 18.

These two national surveys also revealed that respondents, who were mostly 50 years and older (86%), had only been in the deanship for five years or less (69%). This finding prompted an interest in attempting to identify more directly the self-reported factors contributing to longevity in the deanship, defined as someone who has served *at least* five years in the role of education dean, thereby circumventing the revolving door syndrome.

Phase 4: Longevity in the Deanship
Phase 4, which took place between 2018 and 2020, involved 181 deans who responded to a third national survey that was distributed by AACTE. The 12-item online survey about longevity asked practicing deans who had served in their roles for five or more years to share their perspectives on the personal and professional benefits, the impact on their institutions, factors that could contribute to or jeopardize their own longevity in the deanship, and the perceived optimal length of time to stay in the same position. Deans responded to questions such as: "What factors have most influenced you to stay in your position as an education dean?" "What are the benefits to your school/college/university for your staying in the role of dean for as many years as you have?" "What do you find most gratifying about your role as an education dean?" and "What factors could conceivably limit your time in the education dean's role?" Open, axial, and selective coding were used to determine a core variable that included most or all of the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Gallicano, 2013).

A majority (60%) of the deans who completed this survey had served in their position for more than seven years. The factor of *job satisfaction*, broadly defined, emerged as the main reason education deans reported staying in their position. Most frequently they mentioned enjoying serving in their positions because they: 1) felt supported, 2) still had goals to accomplish, 3) were committed to their institution and their students, 4) had a great team and meaningful work relationships, 5) believed in leadership stability, and to a lesser extent, (6) thought that the job supported their personal life and financial needs.

They reported that their job satisfaction comes from what they are accomplishing for their schools and colleges, a belief rooted in which they believe is a result of the support that they have to effect and sustain change with programs and initiatives. The deans indicated that they continue to be entrusted to provide continuity and consistency for their various constituencies while enjoying their camaraderie, and they believe in their institutions and in the people with whom they work. They referenced how they use their positions and experiences to advocate strategically and influence outcomes, which contributes to the stability for their schools and colleges.

They also identified the most unsatisfying and frustrating aspects of their positions including politics, personnel, job demands, and budget. Specifically, they mentioned: 1) the political climate of teacher education, 2) personnel matters, 3) lack of resources/budget, 4) heavy workload, 5) faculty issues with motivation, productivity, and behaviors, and 6) the political climate at their institutions.

Although as a general rule the deans could not predict the length of time that they would remain in their positions, a majority (67%) of them expressed that they do not believe there is an upper limit for serving in the role, which is consistent with the findings of Gmelch et al. (2011) and Thomas & Fragueiro, (2011). They expressed the view that the individual person and the situation ought to determine one's continued service in the role.

Highlights and Implications

Over the course of a quarter century that involved qualitative or quantitative research, the perspectives that 423 education deans held on their roles were shared, some perhaps responding to more than one of AACTE's anonymous surveys. They did so through interviews, responses to vignettes, situational self-analyses, and qualitative and qualitative surveys about their problem-solving strategies, the skills and practices that they use, their essential values for succeeding in their positions, and the most prominent factors for remaining in them. In the collective of mixed-methods research, their perspectives give rise to an instructive framework that might explain the long-term success that some education deans enjoy. That framework, which appears in Figure 3, is offered for possible consideration and as a basis for further testing.

Figure 3
Profile of a Successful Education Dean
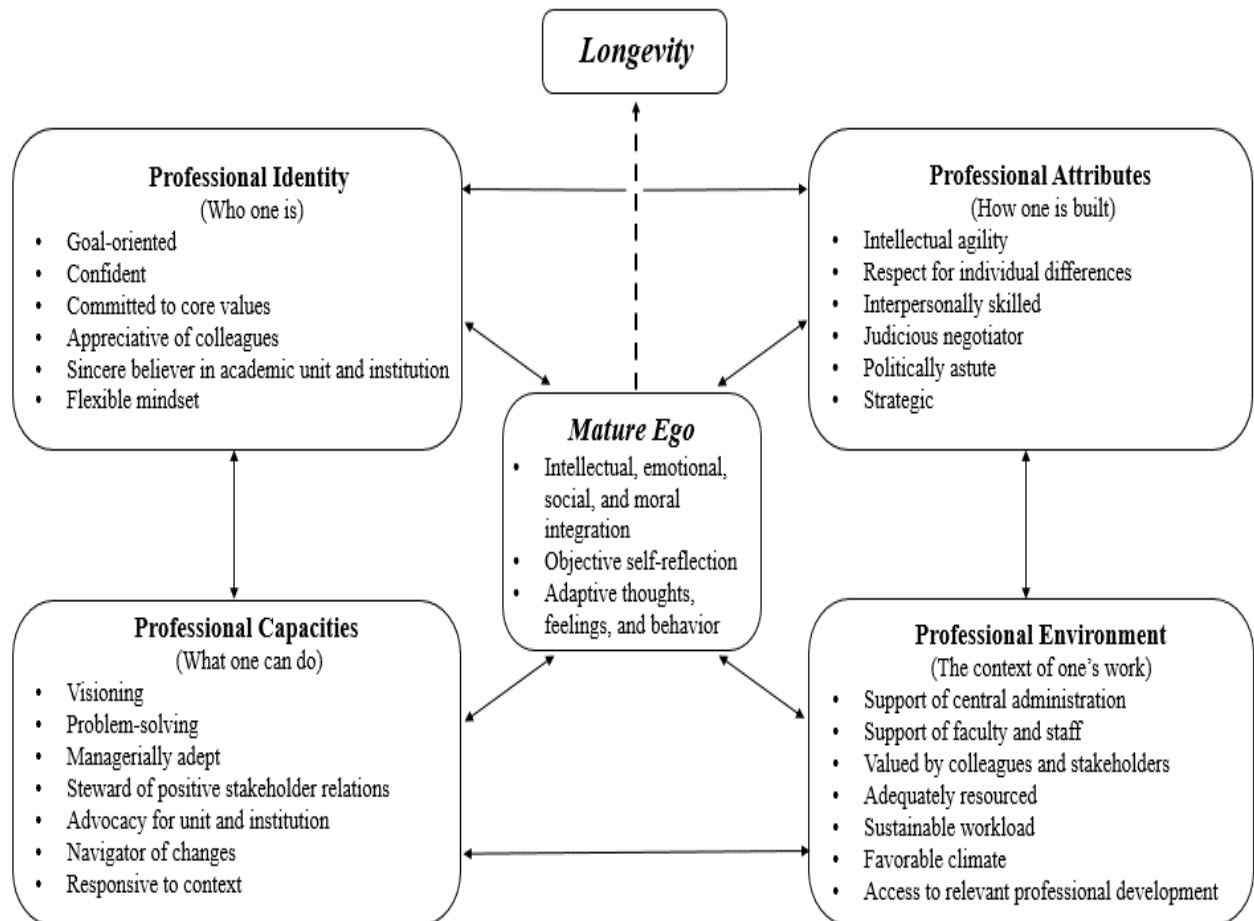
The main results across studies, and indicated in Figure 3, is that the construct of a *mature ego* emerged as the centerpiece of effective leadership because it allows the individual to tap into different dimensions of their leadership strategies, skills, and dispositions to keep adjusting to changes in their professional environment. Their professional identities, attributes, and capacities, stemming from their mature ego, contributed to job satisfaction and longevity when working within a supportive environment. Notwithstanding conditions outside one's control, a mature ego provides the psychological backbone for the pivotal dance needed to keep functioning. Deans are expected to make quick and reasonable decisions while satisfying multiple constituencies (King & Hampel, 2018). They need to have a strong sense of professional identity to be able to self-evaluate how their decisions affect their stakeholders and to adjust accordingly (Wepner et al., 2008). If they are not able to appreciate the impact of their decision making and their ego is severely threatened by the political context, usually job satisfaction is compromised which can lead to exit plans. As discovered during Phase 1, the key is to be in touch with how the ego is being affected to help buffer readiness to leave prematurely.

This contention assumes that all other factors including health, personal life, and financial health are intact.

A mature ego integrates four dimensions—intellectual, emotional, social, and moral—and intuitively knows when to depend on one over the other within one's context and creates solutions that are mutually supportive of colleagues and the institutional context (Loevinger, 1976; Wepner et al., 2008). The more that education deans understand how their leadership characteristics affect their decision making, the easier it will be for them to lead proactively and flexibly, rather than reactively. This awareness is especially important with changes that constantly happen with personnel, institutional policies, and statewide and national accreditation standards (Butin, 2016).

Effectively, education deans are in a position to serve others; or as expressed by the deans, to be advocates for their constituencies. As one dean stated in the original research, the concept of faculty servant guided this dean's tenure in the position. In serving others, education deans work with stakeholders to initiate, implement, and sustain programs, projects, and special initiatives (Thomas & Fragueiro, 2011). The importance of interpersonal/negotiating skills in achieving these outcomes arose in Phase 2 as an essential ability for deans, especially working with key persons within their own units or working within existing relationships. Such open and honest alliances with faculty and staff contribute to accomplishing the goals that have been set (Batch & Heyliger, 2014; Wasicsko & Batch, 2014; Wepner et al., 2013; Wepner et al., 2014; Wiley, 2013).

The accomplishment of goals, which is part and parcel of a dean's term in office, reflects an evolving vision that fits with the institutional context, one's ability to manage various facets of the goals, and the confidence to forge ahead in the face of financial, personnel, and political roadblocks (Professional Identity) (Gmelch, 2002; Gmelch et al, 2011). These characteristics, identified in Phase 3, appear to be vital for ensuring positive outcomes, especially if one is adept at using interpersonal/negotiating skills to bring ideas to fruition. Undergirding the ability to realize a vision is a dean's strong sense of professional identity as a leader so that they can be sensitive to and responsive to their stakeholders, transcend and cope with conflict and disappointment, and keep determining ways to regroup (Butin, 2016; Eisner, 1991, 1998). As identified in Phase 4, of the many essential traits that deans should have, flexibility and follow through also contribute to the ability to accomplish goals (Professional Capacity).

Not to be overlooked in determining deans' success is their ability to balance their colleagues' needs with their institutions' needs. As strategists, they know that they have a moral obligation, or sense of duty, to pursue opportunities and create solutions that do no harm to their institution. They understand the importance of managing both up and down to facilitate compromises that eventually lead to mutually accepted results (Butin, 2016; Gmelch, 2002; June, 2014).

Although difficult to confirm, yet nonetheless illuminating, the deans who have avoided the revolving door syndrome reported a perception of support from their faculty and staff and upper-

level administration. This support has provided them with the platform to realize important goals for their schools and colleges, while enjoying meaningful relationships (Professional Environment). They believe that they can provide leadership stability that helps their institutions to move forward, with deference to past practices and historical milestones that new leaders cannot provide. These deans commented on their own self-awareness, collaborative ways, and focus on serving others. They appeared to seek and encourage cooperation, collegiality, and support, while finding ways to negotiate and compromise to achieve desired outcomes for their faculty, staff, and students (Williams, 2017). They understood their political realities and contended sufficiently well with personnel and budgetary challenges (Professional Attributes). Their overall job satisfaction seemed to come from a strong sense of professional identity that their leadership skills are valued enough by their various constituencies that they are able to advocate strategically and influence outcomes that benefit their schools and colleges, while satisfying their own personal needs.

Despite these last 25 years of research having come from deans' self-reports, self-reflections, and self-analyses, and despite limitations existing with the surveys (such as the rate of return and geographical representation of respondents), the findings nevertheless offer what appear to be important insights for currently practicing and prospective deans. The original conceptual model of deans' problem-solving approaches revealed the importance of taking a step back to define the problems, and while realizing that they might not see things the way others do, education deans need to work within existing relationships, and without losing sight of who they are or what their responsibilities are. These ideas surfaced during subsequent studies, with particular attention to the need to work closely, honestly, and flexibly with others to serve effectively. When deans described reasons for their long-term success, they referenced similar beliefs and approaches. Taken as a whole, successful deans appear to call upon multiple thought processes and strategies to do their jobs, and they seem to know intuitively the importance of assessing their situations, weighing different options, and working prudently with their colleagues up, down, and around to do what needs to be done, all the while not compromising who they are (Gmelch et al., 2011).

Recommendations for Professional Development

Every phase of the lengthy research agenda pointed to the need for some type of professional development with a focus on self-reflection on one's leadership. Although it was acknowledged that some deans might not be naturally inclined to engage in self-reflective practices, a series of recommendations arose which could contribute toward deans' effectiveness in their positions. These recommendations identified the desirability of deans examining their core values in relation to their decision-making and daily actions and think about how their administrative beliefs and practices potentially affect others. Throughout all recommendations, it was assumed that many or most education deans have not necessarily had graduate coursework in leadership or "practicum" experiences that allowed them to shadow experienced leaders in higher education, receive objective feedback on the way in which they operate, and get do-overs for less-than-stellar performances.

Seminars, institutes, symposia, retreats, and conferences were the formats proposed for

gathering and/or working with other deans. Vignettes, case studies, stories, and anecdotes of real-life situations were cited as discussion tools and prompts that could provide a glimpse into deans' approaches to problem-solving. Of utmost importance was the need to offer professional development opportunities and exercises that had relevance to deans' own administrative situations so that they would be more open to engage in inwardly focused discussions about their role as dean (Robinson, 1996).

Examples abound of discussion prompts that could be used that offer real-life scenarios of daily challenges for deans. For example, a faculty member approaches a dean to approve the purchase of materials for a methodology course that are critical for students' hands-on experiences, yet the provost has put a freeze on any expenditures for the entire academic year. Or, a dean discovers that the majority of the senior faculty on the college's promotion and tenure committee voted to tenure a faculty member who has not met the P& T's criteria that are written in the guidelines.

These types of dilemmas require deans to define and address problems in relation to their stakeholders, their contexts, and themselves. These scenarios provide the impetus for deans to analyze their problem-solving strategies and better understand their skills, attitudes, and perspectives as they grapple with the burden of disappointing and/or disrupting expectations, policies, or institutional practices. Which leadership dimensions prevail? How are they using their interpersonal/negotiating skills? Which core values predominate? How do their core values affect their decision-making? What is the impact of their decisions on their own sense of self?

One-on-one coaching, leadership study groups, buddy systems, reflective journaling, and peer observations are some of the ways in which education deans can examine and self-reflect about the way in which they lead. They can look at the outcomes of both successful and unsuccessful individual, small-group, and large-group meetings, or analyze interactions with faculty and administrative staff, colleagues across the institution, and supervisors while attempting to accomplish goals. They can use any of these fora to discover ways in which their patterns of behavior are contributing, or not contributing, to positive outcomes with, for instance, an unsupportive provost or a faculty contrarian. They can also look at how they handle new state mandates or highly challenging institutional edicts while tackling everyday issues.

Now that virtual platforms have become much more nearly customary for meetings and events, any of the aforementioned ideas are easier to arrange. Also useful with virtual platforms, including email and texts, is a systematic examination of one's style of communication to provide yet another opportunity to study how deans interact through written correspondences with others to develop recommendations and protocols for facilitating productive and satisfactory outcomes. Communication patterns during scheduled meetings can be compared with impromptu conversations to get additional insights about deans' interpersonal/negotiating skill patterns.

Such professional development opportunities are intended to help deans know more about their own professional identities and recognize similar and different responses in others while interacting, communicating, and helping the organization. Deans then are poised to use their psychological resources to negotiate their positions, function more effectively, and create cultures that work for them and their stakeholders.

Higher education institutions might already offer professional development orientations and opportunities for deans and other executive leaders. Professional associations such as AACTE should continue to take the lead in creating safe harbors for deans to delve into their own leadership attributes. Expert consultants are likewise vital, or at least beneficial, to coaching deans on effective leadership practices and contribute to developing resiliency in the deanship which would help with leadership stability in higher education.

Conclusion

A dean's ability to be effective is surely a combination of the person and the institutional culture. Critical to this success is a strong sense of professional identity that enables deans to self-evaluate how their decisions affect their constituency and adjust accordingly. They cannot minimize the impact of their daily decision making on the quality of life within their organization (Wepner et al., 2008). It is not just about accomplishing tasks, but the impact on others. There obviously are factors and challenges beyond an education dean's control such as enrollment, state guidelines, accreditation, personnel and policy changes in upper administration, and personnel changes within one's school of college. However, a dean must be able to keep adjusting and navigating changes, always maintaining relationships yet being true to oneself.

While the size and scope of responsibilities differ across education deans, their primary function of preparing and professionally developing teachers and leaders remains the same. As schools and colleges of education continue to address the challenges of a declining interest in the teaching profession, the leadership of education deans almost certainly becomes more important than ever for ensuring sustainability for their schools and colleges. Furthermore, their ability to self-reflect about their leadership attributes and core values in relation to their practices and vision for the profession of teacher education can be indicative of their potential long-term success in this highly politicized position.

In addition to possessing the necessary psychological mindset, strategies, and skills to function in their roles, education deans need to have the wherewithal to remain in their positions long enough to ensure that their academic units accomplish their goals. Conversely, momentum related to a unit's progress is interrupted every time a new dean must be hired because of the time and money expended to search for, recruit, and coach a new leader (Persson, 2014).

If administrative longevity, especially at the level of dean, is valued in higher education, efforts need to be made on multiple fronts. Relevant professional development should be made available through institutions and professional associations. Impediments identified by education deans should be addressed to help them contribute in significant ways, and support from upper

administration is essential (Merrion, 2003). Chief academic officers should empower deans so that they can do their jobs suitably (Henk et al., in press). Likewise, cooperation from faculty and staff contributes substantially to deans' level of job satisfaction. When deans feel satisfied with their positions because of support from both directions, which is likely a reflection of their own leadership acumen, they will endure in being effective leaders for their schools and colleges which bodes well for the profession overall.

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