

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**AN ANALYSIS OF VERTICAL LEADER DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES AT A
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN THE NORTH WEST PROVINCE, SOUTH
AFRICA.**

By

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ABSTRACT

Vertical leader development practices are an important aspect of the learning and development function, particularly as leadership is becoming more complex. Emerging research suggests that there is a trend of dissatisfaction among human capital development strategists, who believe leader development interventions are largely unable to match the demands of a VUCA world. This is particularly relevant for higher education institutions in South Africa as the sector is going through large-scale transformation. There is consensus that effective leadership abilities can be developed. However, many leader development programs do not yield the desired outcomes.

The most important reason why leader development programs tend to fail is due to a strong focus on horizontal leader development approaches that emphasize knowledge, skills and technical competencies. Thus, recently there has been a shift towards vertical leader development where the focus is on qualitative sense-making leaders learn as opposed to strictly what they learn, and how this qualitative process adds value to the organization. The aim of this study therefore was to investigate the practices of vertical leader development at a higher education institution in the North West Province, South Africa. Furthermore, the study sought to describe the role and importance of vertical leader development practices and furthermore to identify challenges as experienced by the leaders at a higher education institution from a Complexity Leadership Theory perspective.

The study also aimed to provide recommendations on how to deal with challenges posed by vertical leader development practices in a higher education institution. An interpretive qualitative approach was adopted, using an exploratory and interpretive description research design to explore and describe the lived-experiences of participants. A purposive sampling approach was followed to obtain qualitative data from participants who are well-acquainted with the organization and have decision-making responsibilities. A total number of 15 participants responded to semi-structured interviews and the data thematically analyzed.

The main contribution of the study was proposing Complexity Leadership Theory principles as facets of vertical leader development which may serve as a basis for further empirical research. To date no such research was found in peer-reviewed scholarly publications. For the organization concerned, some recommendations are suggested to improve its own vertical leader development practices. This included specific focus on vertical leader development in the L&D strategy, drafting policies that guide the implementation of vertical leader development strategies, conducting thorough needs analysis, adopting a leadership philosophy based on a complexity mind-set and investing in partnering with vertical leader development specialists.

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ABBREVIATIONS

VUCA	Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity
ROI	Return on investment
CAS	Complex adaptive system
CLT	Complexity leadership theory
SADC	Southern African Development Community
L&D	Learning and development
SABPP	South African Board for Personnel Practices
VLD	Vertical leader development
HLD	Horizontal leader development

CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter's purpose is to give the background to the research problem identified as part of this study. It outlines the purpose of the study and the research questions. The chapter also states the significance and delineates the scope, delimitations as well as limitations of the study. Finally, the in the last section the structure of the dissertation and definitions of terms used are outlined.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The study was motivated by challenges that a leading South African institution in the higher education sector has with regards to its vertical leader development (VLD) practices and as such could benefit from this research. The South African higher education sector is going through a tumultuous period (Dirksevenschalkwyk et al., 2013). Therefore, the institution selected for this study has to deal with its own current challenges in the form of large-scale transformation and competitive struggles that cause continuous disruption. As the researcher is employed at the institution as a psychologist, he has observed that currently there appears to be a climate of dissatisfaction with executive and middle management from the perspective of students, frontline employees and other stakeholders on a variety of core organizational and business process matters. On the other hand, it is also widely opined that executive and middle management has an enormous task on their hands in terms of making strategic decisions that will have a defining impact on the future of the institution. The human resources management component of the institution has been completely overhauled and as a support division to the institution, it continuous to face tough demands both internally and external to the institution. VLD is but one area where a sound strategy is required to propel the institution towards its objectives.

1.3 BACKGROUND AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Vertical leader development (VLD) refers to improvement in a leader's thinking capacities towards a more complex, systemic, strategic, and collaborative approach (Petrie, 2014). This study of VLD practices was conducted in an organisation that operates within the higher education sector in South Africa. Emerging research conducted by leading consulting firms suggest that there is a trend of dissatisfaction among human capital development strategists, who believe that leader and leadership development interventions are largely unable to match the demands of a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world (Conradie, 2016). It is further asserted that the inability of leaders to thrive in the work context results in poorer overall

organizational performance (Conradie, 2016). Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm and Mckee (2014) contend that while leadership theory has over a century of scholarly inquiry, it has been poorly linked with leader and leadership development. This is a particularly vexing issue, as there seem to be no clear-cut answers as to whether organizations that spend resources on leader and leadership development programs are receiving a return on investment (Seidle, Fernandez, Perry & James, 2016).

Some of the reasons why leader development programs tend to fail have been attributed to horizontal leader development approaches, where the emphasis has been almost exclusively on technical knowledge, skills and competencies (Odendaal, 2016). However, recently there has been a shift include VLD where the focus is on how leaders learn as opposed to strictly what they learn, and how this qualitative process adds value to the organization (Odendaal, 2016, Petrie, 2014). While VLD has received much acknowledgment and support in leadership research, its empirical veracity, particularly in complex higher education environments still needs to be proven. Moreover, while the construct has attracted support it also has not been aligned with any solid theoretical leadership paradigm.

Research studies have found that the higher education sector in South Africa is an industry in crisis (Davids, 2016) and the dominant narratives appear to revolve around issues of strategic leadership, both at governmental and institutional levels as its focal point (Shivambu, 2015). It is suggested that the consequences of the failure to transform the sector can be seen in the country's underperforming economy, where an increasing focus has been on talent and skilled workers (Docquier and Machado, 2016). Thus, the cost of misaligning leadership with required social change can be high and difficult to recover from (VanRensburg, 2015). In light of the above, the relevance of this proposed research would be to analyze VLD practices at a higher education institution by gauging the views of a sample of its senior managers in order to contribute positively towards managing such complex matters. South Africa.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the study was as follows:

- To investigate the practices of vertical leader development at a higher education institution in North West Province.

The secondary objectives for the study therefore were to:

- To describe the role and importance of vertical leader development practices in a higher education institution.
- To identify and discuss the challenges associated with vertical leader development practices as experienced by the leaders at a higher education institution.
- To provide recommendations on how to deal with challenges posed by vertical leader development practices in a higher education institution.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions guiding this study were:

- What is the role and importance of vertical leader development practices in a higher education institution?
- What challenges are associated with vertical leader development practices as experienced by the leaders at a higher education institution?
- How can vertical leader development practices be improved in a higher education institution?

1.6 METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methodology was utilized in this research. Qualitative methods as a research strategy emphasizes textual data rather than the quantification of data (Hammersley, 2013). It encompasses an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the research context where phenomena are studied in their natural settings and meaning is created through interpretations (Willig, 2008a). An exploratory and interpretive description research design was employed to explore and describe the lived-experiences of participants. A total of 15 participants were recruited and data collected by means of semi-structured interviews. Their anonymity as well as that of the higher education institution is protected as required by ethical standards. The thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006) was done to construct themes as the research findings.

1.7 SCOPE, DELIMITATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The research was conducted at one of South Africa's leading higher education institutions that is based in the North West Province, but also has smaller campuses in Gauteng and Eastern Cape, as well as satellite campuses for distance learning across the SADC region. The institution offers a wide variety of academic and professional training programmes, distance learning, entrepreneurial learning, niche-focused research entities and sport participation from amateur to provincial, national and elite professional levels.

The focus of this study is located within the learning and development (L&D) sphere of human capital. While there are overlapping aspects of organizational development, as is often the case when managing people through change, the particular emphasis is the L&D component. As such, the study outlines the complex higher education landscape in South Africa with reference to transformation and leadership. VLD is discussed with particular emphasis on developing capacities for leading in complex organisations. Complexity leadership theory (CLT) guides the discourse on acquiring such capacities.

Even though qualitative research methods yield unique findings, such findings cannot be generalized to a wider population. Semi-structured interviews were the only source of data collection, and were therefore subject to the quality of responses by the participants. Although, extensive efforts were made to put participants at ease by explaining the context and purpose of the study, possible defensiveness on the part of the participants might still have occurred given the current volatile state of affairs in the higher education sector.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

1.8.1 CHAPTER ONE

This chapter provided an introduction of the study. It also presented an overview of the research problem, the background of the study and the context in which the research was conducted. The chapter outlined the purpose and the research questions to be answered and the motivation of the study. The aim and objectives and the focus of the study were also discussed.

1.8.2 CHAPTER TWO

This chapter is comprised of a literature review which attempts to understand and explain vertical leader development practices in higher education institutions.

1.8.3 CHAPTER THREE

This chapter outlines the research methodology to be used. It describes the design of the study, the sampling method, the data collection methods and the instrument used to collect the data.

1.8.4 CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter presented the findings of the study. The researcher links these findings to the literature review.

1.8.5 CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter presents the key findings and recommendations for management and future research and conclusion of the study.

1.9. DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Key terms	Definition
Leadership	Leadership refers to the position held by a leader (manager or supervisor), his/her capacity to lead, as well as act of leading (Gage and Smith, 2016).
Leadership development	The organizational processes that enable leaders to cultivate their potential to execute their roles successfully at a collective level: this includes setting direction, creating alignment and fostering commitment (Armstrong, 2012, Vilakati, 2016).
Leader development	The enabling of individual capacities in terms personal development, social skills and ability effectively execute specific roles (Vilakati, 2016).
Leader development practices	The strategies, programs and interventions aimed at enhancing leader capabilities.
Higher education	Refers to post-secondary education, such as a university or college.
Sustainability	The capacity of an organization or system to endure and progress.
Vertical development	Advancement in a person's thinking capability, the ability to think in more complex, systemic, strategic, and interdependent ways (Petrie, 2014).
Senior managers	Support staff employed at the level of senior manager and director of an operational division. Academic staff employed at the level of director of a school and dean of faculty.
Complexity theory	An inter-disciplinary paradigm that offers an elucidation of complex systems and provides prescriptions for diagnosing, intervening and managing such systems (Bodhanya, 2016a, Messier et al., 2014).
Complex adaptive system	A network of interacting and interdependent agents that are connected by a common dynamic for the purpose of a mutual objective (Price, 2014).
Complexity leadership	Emphasizes the enabling of continuous adaptive learning, creativity and

theory	adaptability of complex adaptive systems in a knowledge-based era (Price, 2014)
Qualitative research	An approach to research that is concerned with meaning, textual data rather than statistics and how people experience and make sense of their worlds (Willig, 2008a).
Case study	A research design where the focus is on intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit situated in a specific context to provide insight into real-life situations (Ponelis, 2015).
Lived experience	The research participant's human experiences, choices and options and how those factors influence their perceptions of knowledge (Given, 2008a).

1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The higher education context in South Africa is a challenging space of transformation. Leadership has often been associated as a critical success factor in effectively navigating such large-scale transitions. Hence, leader development continues to be an area of interest from L&D standpoint. However, VLD remains an untapped area in research. This chapter briefly sets the scene in terms of addressing that gap and demarcating the context of the study. The next chapter will present the literature review of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: A PERSPECTIVE OF VERTICAL LEADER DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The past thirty years have seen steady advances in the field of leader and leadership development. However, despite its progress the field has struggled to keep pace with the demands of the modern world (Day et. al, 2014). This is perhaps not surprising as the current context of business leadership is defined by the acronym VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) (Wilson and Lawton-Smith, 2016, Rodriguez and Rodriguez, 2015). VUCA describes the turbulence in the world that is characterized by disruption and volatility caused by rapid and large-scale change (Hall and Rowland, 2016). The VUCA phenomenon is global and manifests within politics, societies, economies, the natural environment and technologies and as a result business leaders are often left feeling uncertain about the future (Sarkar, 2016, Bunker et al., 2012b, Hall and Rowland, 2016).

Nonetheless, it is has been well established in research that for leadership to yield a positive impact within an organization, it has to continually adapt to, and align with the prevailing context (Conradie, 2016). It is argued that in the current context of VUCA, leaders are required to adapt and change on a personal level in order to find clarity amidst complexity and see opportunities within chaotic environments (Bunker et. al, 2012). It is therefore, of great importance that leader development research focus on the nature of these complexities to determine what it will take to develop leaders capable of adding value to their organizations during these challenging times (Bennet et. al, 2016) and going forward into Industry 4.0 (Roblek et al., 2016).

2.2 UNDERSTANDING THE LEADERSHIP CONTEXT: THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA

It is widely acknowledged that higher education within the global context is changing (Wals, 2014, Cingel, 2018). The pressure for change locally has been all too prominent, as the higher education sector in South Africa is effectively a sector under-going radical transformation (Du Preez et. al, 2016). In addition to the pressures of the modern day VUCA world, transformation in the South African higher education sector has a rather obvious historical reference point, that of apartheid (Du Preez et al., 2016). Hence, the country's higher education history has been turbulent in nature (Kamsteeg, 2016). With the commencement of constitutional democracy in 1994, and the promulgation of the government's White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education of 1997, drastic and fundamental change of institutions

within the sector crafted under apartheid times has been on the national agenda (Davids, 2016). However, notwithstanding the revision and drafting of transformative policies within the sector, the problem has always been with respect to effectively implementing them (Heleta, 2016). The #feesmustfall protests that started in 2015, with its unexpected, rapid and relentless momentum took the transformation narrative in the sector to unprecedented levels as students and progressive academics added their voices to the discourse (Becker, 2017). This has no doubt added to the complexity of transforming higher education institutions in the country (Kamsteeg, 2016).

Concerning organizational transformation, Cameron and Green (2017) maintain that organizations have always struggled to implement change successfully, and at the same time they were required to find effective ways of developing their leaders. It is the combination of these two challenges, they argue, that often create a leadership crisis. Research studies have found that the higher education sector in South Africa is an industry in crisis (Dirksevenschalkwyk et al., 2013) and the dominant narratives indeed appear to revolve around leading transformation effectively (Shivambu, 2015).

It is suggested that the consequences of failing to effectively transform the sector can be seen in the country's underperforming economy, where an increasing focus has been on talent and skilled workers (Docquier and Machado, 2016). Thus, the cost of misaligning leadership with required social change can be high and very difficult to recover from (VanRensburg, 2015).

In the South African higher education context, leadership challenges emanating from the realities of a complex world are further compounded by the country's status as an emerging economy, its diverse population and the quandaries of an unsettled and young democracy (Heystek, 2016). For the leaders in higher education institutions who manage these complex systems, some of these demands manifest practically as or in:

- Pressure to innovate pedagogical methods technologically within a competitive environment.
- Fast-tracking transformation, both at an organizational and academic level with reference to budgetary constraints, operating procedures, scholarly ethos, relevant curriculums and social values.
- Mergers and re-structuring within higher education institutions.
- Dealing with an access demand for higher education, accessibility challenges and academic performance issue due to the many students who are not academically prepared for entry to tertiary-level studies.

- Political divisions between institutional leadership, academics and students.
- Difficulty in ensuring safety and security of people on campuses and protection of institutional resources due to violence and sabotage.
- The increasing loss of management and academic talent through retirement and resignations from the system.
- Delivering employable graduates to industry.

(Heystek, 2016, Bezuidenhout et al., 2013, Naicker and Mestry, 2016, Perold and Costandius, 2015, VanNiekerk, 2005, Verhoef, 2016).

Therefore, given the above contextualization, it is clear that there is a need for effective leader development practices to transform institutions in the sector in order to meet these challenging, competitive and sustainability demands. Furthermore, it stands to reason that leader development practices in higher education institutions should be prioritized within its learning and development strategic framework (Albertyn and Frick, 2016). Before this point is examined, a conceptual perspective on how leadership is constructed in this research is discussed.

2.3 CONCEPTUALISING THE LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE

Before considering the challenges in leader development practices, it is important to first understand the contemporary meanings of leadership. Despite being one of the most studied topics in organisational research, there still appears to be no consensus on a single definition of leadership and what the role of a leader is (Taylor and Vorster, 2016). Perhaps to give the phenomenon and more importantly, efforts made to understand it its due, one must acknowledge that leadership studies has become an established field of scientific research in its own right (Dinh et al., 2014). Hence, the definition of leadership is continuously evolving based on the tenets of the theoretical perspective one chooses at a particular time, in a particular context for a particular purpose (O'Connell, 2014). This has immense implications for the development efforts of leaders, as leader development practices ought to align with rigorous scholarly leadership theory (Day et al., 2014). Currently, there appears to be no shortage of competing paradigms or leader development programmes (Allio, 2012). Nonetheless, numerous scholars have contended that to lead in today's dynamic, competitive and turbulent world requires that organisations, its context and understanding of leadership have to be viewed differently (Hanson and Ford, 2010, Hogue and Lord, 2007, Kilburg and Donohue, 2011). This implies a paradigmatic shift from conventional leadership theories towards a complexity perspective in keeping with the demands of the environment (Bodhanya, 2009). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, leadership is conceptualised as:

an emergent property of a complex process involving the interaction between people in different positions in an organisation and its social and environmental context that is difficult to predict, achieve and sustain (Plowman and Duchon, 2008). While managers and subordinates fulfil different roles in organisations, leadership can be enacted by non-administrative management role players in the organisation (Kilburg and Donohue, 2011). Leadership therefore, is a shared quality that is distributed throughout the organisation as opposed to a quality or function that resides fully in persons in positions of authority (Bodhanya, 2009, Arena and Uhl-Bien, 2016).

The theoretical background with regards to complexity leadership, both pertaining its core assumptions and relevance to this study will be explained in later sections of this chapter. The following section examines the importance of L&D in higher education.

2.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN AN ERA OF COMPLEXITY

L&D can be defined as the practice of delivering occupationally directed and other learning activities that enable and enhance the knowledge, practical skills and work place experience and behaviour of individuals and teams that is based on current and future occupational demands for optimal organisational performance and sustainability (Diaz, 2016, SABPP, 2016). According to SABPP (2016), the L&D function aligns with the National Human Resources Management Standards as seen in figure 3. A key aspect of L&D in an organisation is therefore, to create and implement a people development strategy that improves an organisation's capacity to adapt to change, realise innovation and sustain a competitive advantage by building on the skills of employees (Katz, 2016, SABPP, 2016). This is especially important as Meyer (2016) observes that, all too often newly promoted executives are well equipped with technical knowledge and skills, but are often lacking and even unaware of the complex abilities and skills needed for leading people and change. This holds true for higher education institutions where the primary emphasis is on creating and disseminating knowledge systems, but where there is also a need for conducting efficient and sustainable business operations (YuSingOng, 2012).

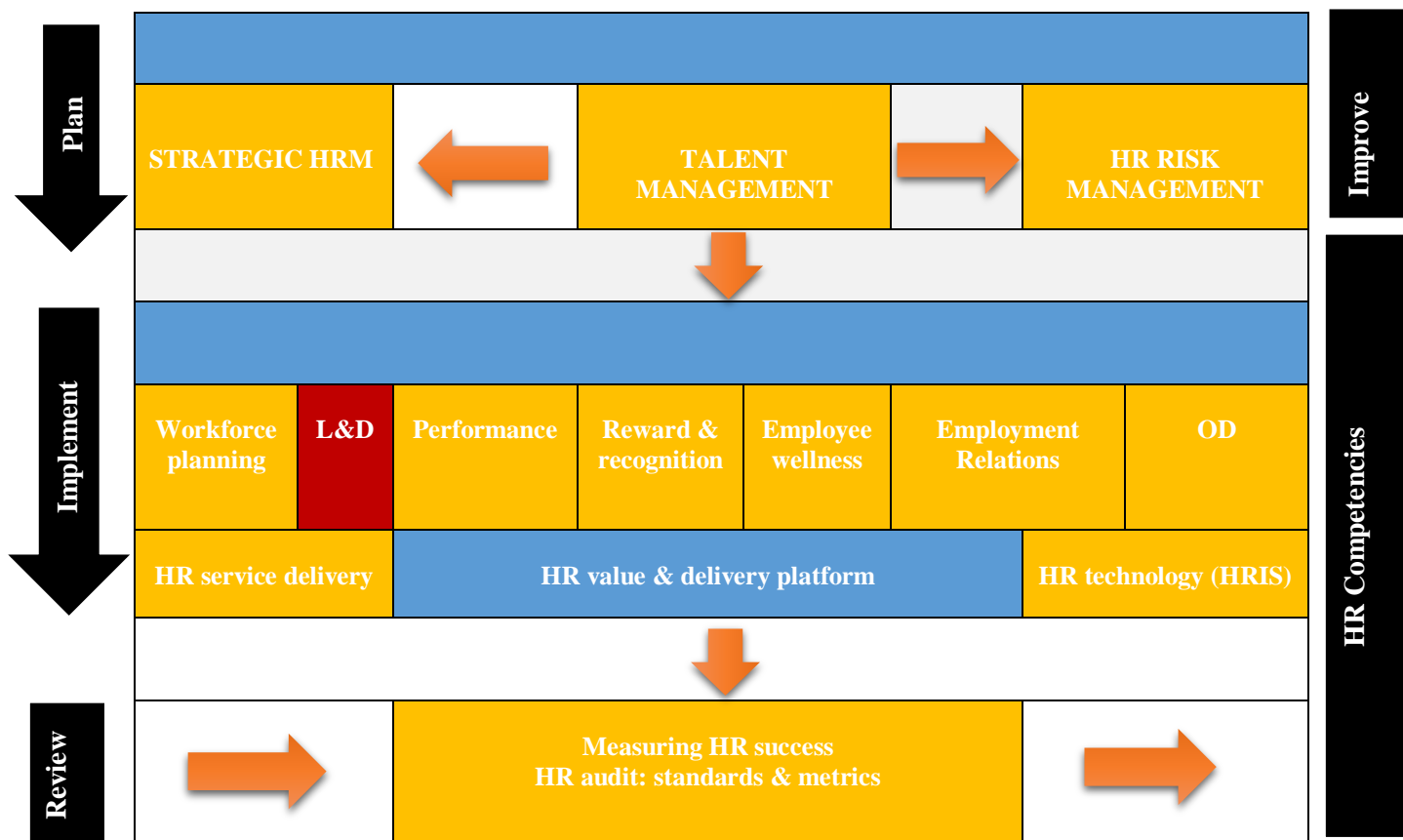


Figure 2.1. Adapted from (SABPP, 2016)

It is important that L&D strategists understand the magnitude of change the organisation is dealing with, as it relates to the demand placed on its leader development practices. Hodges and Gill (2015) distinguishes between small-scale (incremental) and large-scale (radical) transformation. While small-scale changes aim to provide improvements of existing structures, large-scale transformational change aims to re-define the strategic direction, organisational structure, power relationships, control systems, cultural assumptions and identity which impacts on the deep structure of the organisation (Hodges and Gill, 2015). Therefore, strategic alignment within leadership and leader development becomes vitally important (Goni et al., 2017).

The South African higher education sector faces several drivers of change, but most relevant is its ongoing transition from apartheid to democratic structures (Herbst and Conradie, 2011). Hence, it is clear that many of the country's higher education institutions are undergoing large-scale transformation (Herbst and Conradie, 2011). Furthermore, while these institutions seem to be quite efficient in creating and managing knowledge, negotiating the complex human elements involved in institutional transformation processes has been the vexing issue that has been noted to result in confusion, frustration, lack of employee loyalty, clashes in corporate culture and low morale for the people involved (Herbst and Conradie, 2011).

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that leadership competencies can be developed (Brown and Millar, 2012, Bunker et al., 2012b). However, Allio (2012) maintains that organisations who send high-potential individuals on leadership development programmes with the expectation that they become better leaders, do not always realise the expected return on investment. There is some evidence to suggest that among the main reasons why leader development programmes fail, the following aspects stand out (Katz, 2016):

- lack of contextual perspective and systems thinking
- rigid focus on organizational needs
- unrealistic time demands
- unsuitable learning methods
- loyalty to L&D business partners who are out of touch with relevant needs of the organization
- adopting popular commercialised “fads” (Katz, 2016).

Notwithstanding these challenges, Katz (2016) maintains that senior management development is taken very seriously and is on the rise in South Africa. In particular, are individually-based learning programmes that emphasise personal development needs that extends their competence beyond technical capabilities to the human capital arena that is equally important for organizational success (Katz, 2016).

Thus, it is clear that the L&D function is an essential human resources component in developing leaders and leadership capabilities for organizations in an area of increased complexity and uncertainty (Meyer, 2016). The leadership development standard for South Africa developed by the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP, 2016), emphasises the following fundamental requirements for good leadership development:

- an organization must have a clear perspective of how effective leadership is understood and be able to develop an appropriate leadership competency model to express it.
- individual leader development must be optimised relative to the person involved.
- desired leader behaviour must be identified and role-modelled by senior executives. (SABPP, 2016, Katz, 2016, Meyer, 2016).

The next section examines the differences between leader and leadership development and the relevance each has in complex higher education institutions.

2.5 LEADER DEVELOPMENT VERSUS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

At this juncture, it may be useful to draw a distinction between leader and leadership development. While this study is not oblivious to, or in contention with leadership development, its focus is leader development generally and VLD specifically.

Leadership development is a processes involving multiple individuals where skills are developed at an interpersonal level (Day et. al, 2014). This process includes setting direction, creating alignment and fostering commitment at a collective level (Armstrong, 2012). In leadership development therefore, it is important to understand the development of social interactions that occur in the leadership process, as the main goal is the growth of social capital at more strategic levels in the organization (Day et al., 2014, Megheirkouni, 2016).

The distinction between leader and leadership development has not always been very clear, and thus, was seen as a synonymous process (Day et al., 2014, Clarke, 2013). In line with this reality, a central critique of leadership development models that emanated from the heroic leader-centric perspectives of the past was that leadership development has been too individual focused (Clarke, 2013, VanVelsor, 2008). The more recent complexity models of leadership in particular, support the view that leadership development should be a collective effort that extends its views, methods and participation requirements beyond the top echelons of management (VanVelsor, 2008, Clarke, 2013, Lord, 2008). However, while complexity models of leadership propagate the distributed nature of leadership and its need for development on a much wider organizational level, they are not against individual level development, as the need for changing people's distinct mental models is acknowledged (VanVelsor, 2008).

Making an argument for individual leader development in a collectivist leadership era might appear to be going against the grain on a superficial level (Hammond et al., 2017). However, groundbreaking neuroscience-based leader development research suggests that working to transform individuals in their thinking in the broader spectrum of organizational leadership is not only worthwhile, but represents a vital aspect within the L&D sphere (Waldman et al., 2011, Waldman et al., 2017).

In line with this argument, there has recently been growing interest in changing the nature of leadership development to better prepare leaders to deal with the disruption of a VUCA world (Keeshan and Chetty, 2016). The mental models of individual leaders in general and the tendency to rely on previous experience to engage current and future problems specifically, has been a focal point of this argument (Keeshan and Chetty, 2016). Lane et al. (2010) state that, the manner in which leaders deal with turbulence and uncertainty in the external world is a reflection of how

they deal with change personally within themselves. Thus, while the growing trend towards collective leadership development is well supported, it appears there is a renewed interest for concurrent development of leaders at an individual level in an attempt to bring about changes in their personally held thinking processes (Odendaal, 2016).

With leader development, as alluded to above, the focus is on building human capital and developing individual capacities of leaders (Day et al., 2014). Leader development is an essential component of leadership development (McCauley et al., 2010). Leader development emphasizes individual-based knowledge and skills, abilities and character that is connected to leadership roles and responsibilities (Frizzell et al., 2016). The need for leader development arises when senior managers are required to extend their non-technical skills repertoire, and improve their ability to engage people through self-development (Katz, 2016). Instead of focusing purely on the individual, this process is always aligned with the strategic objectives of the organization and within the broader context of the talent management strategy (Odendaal, 2016). However, until recently leader development has by and large focused too extensively on knowledge-based skills and competencies, and not enough on personal development, which underscores the essence of leader development in the current context (Odendaal, 2016).

Thus, while the need for both system-wide leadership and individually-based leader development is acknowledged (Clarke, 2013), if the full potential of organizational leadership is to be realized, leader development efforts should be aligned with engaging and changing the mindset of employees at all levels with respect to understanding the essence of leadership in an era of complexity (VanVelsor, 2008, Odendaal, 2016, Petrie, 2014). The next section will examine the personal thinking capacities and processes of leaders and why that is relevant in leader development.

2.6 DEFINITION OF VERTICAL LEADER DEVELOPMENT

If Vertical Leader Development (VLD) presents a more novel and distinctive form of leader development (Petrie, 2014), then prior to its definition proper, an understanding conventional leader development is needed.

The conventional idea of developing individual leaders has become known as Horizontal Leader Development (HLD) (Odendaal, 2016). HLD refers to instrumental learning and is most advantageous when the problem and known solutions for it are straightforward (Petrie, 2014). This method of development, which is still very popular, gained its rise to notoriety under the philosophy that regards organizations as ‘machines’ (Casserley and Critchley, 2010). Under the ‘machine’ view of organizations, leaders are believed to be in full control of every aspect of the

organization and could therefore ‘re-engineer’ the business with new knowledge to maximize the bottom line (Casserley and Critchley, 2010). The VUCA world has tested every aspect of this view and on its own it has proven to be ineffective (Sarkar, 2016, Rodriguez and Rodriguez, 2015).

In contrast, VLD refers to the advancement of a person’s thinking capacities towards more complex, systemic and strategic ways (Petrie, 2014). VLD requires deeper structural shifts in a person’s mental model that result in complex perspectives about the self, others, the organization and society in general (Frizzell et al., 2016). The surface-level behaviour of a leader in this view is argued to be less important than the deep structures from which that behaviour arises (Mumford et al., 2015). Therefore, how a leader comes to know has more value than merely what he knows (Brown and Millar, 2012). Developing complex vertical competencies that enhances adaptability, self-awareness, sense-making and the capacity to live and lead during uncertainty is required in the current and, most likely the future contexts of leadership (FritzGerald and Latib, 2015, Bennett et al., 2016). Furthermore, proponents of the VLD approach maintain that through such an adaptive and reflective mindset, coupled with purposeful learning, leaders are able to match and even exceed the management of complexity that they are confronted with (Canals, 2011, Odendaal, 2016). Proponents of VLD do not seek to replace horizontal development at all, rather they argue that both HLD and VLD need to happen simultaneously (Petrie, 2014). For any sustainable personal growth and leader effectiveness to be realized, then both information transfer to the leader and personal transformation of the leader is needed (Petrie, 2014).

VLD highlights an important conceptual shift in how developing leaders should be approached (Petrie, 2014). However, VLD being a fairly recent concept does not yet stand as a coherent theoretical model (McDonald and Spence, 2016). Instead, it relies on existing theories such as cognitive psychological frameworks of adult maturity for instance, and mainstream leadership development models to articulate itself (Frizzell et al., 2016). A commanding theory is often needed during the course of scientific advancement (Greenwald et al., 1986) as that would inspire better techniques that provide improved answers to existing questions (Baumann, 2015). There are both opportunities and dangers in articulating VLD when it comes to aligning it with existing frameworks towards a coherent body of knowledge. An opportunity would align favourably with accepting leadership and its context as complex (Kovacs and Corrie, 2017). In line with this view, the next section explores ideas from complexity science as a possible theoretical vehicle for VLD.

2.7 VERTICAL LEADER DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Following-up on the disconnect between leadership theory and leader development interventions as suggested by the relevant literature (Day et al., 2014, Day and Sin, 2011), advances in the complexity sciences are examined with reference to leadership in general and vertical leader development in particular.

2.7.1 Complexity Theory and Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS)

Complexity science is a different way of thinking about and understanding the world (Tetnbaum and Lawrence, 2011). Hence, it is also a framework through which organizations can be studied and understood (Price, 2014). The central elements of the complexity perspective is that organizations cannot predetermine what it's business environment will be, neither can the environment by itself dictate what an organization will look like and how it must function (Maxfield, 1997). Rather, this view holds that organization and environment continuously interact and by doing so continually define and shape each other (Waddock et al., 2015). The main tenet of the complexity perspective thus, is based on explaining how behaviour emerges through self-organizing networks within the system (Walton, 2016). As no system remains static, the complexity science view therefore, is fundamentally a discipline dedicated to the understanding of change (Kimball and vanRyhn, 2014). In organizations, this has profound implications for defining the leadership approach (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

The application of complexity science to the management and organizational studies has grown dramatically in the last two decades (Maguire et al., 2011). Complexity Theory, has emerged out of earlier first-order Systems Thinking and Chaos Theories (Kovacs and Corrie, 2017), and is seen as the most recent development of how novelty and order emerges in organizational systems (Kimball and vanRyhn, 2014). Hence, the discourse on contemporary leadership studies in the context of VUCA has seen the emergence and increasing popularity of leadership theories based on principles of Complexity Theory (Arena and Uhl-Bien, 2016, Baumann, 2015, Cullen-Lester and Yammarino, 2016, Elkington and Booyesen, 2015, Gerwel Proches and Bodhanya, 2014, Hanson and Ford, 2010, Morrison, 2010, Osborn and Hunt, 2007, Price, 2014, Schneider and Somers, 2006, Uhl-Bien and Marion, 2009, Uhl-Bien et al., 2007, Waddock et al., 2015, Dinh et al., 2014, Clarke, 2013). Complexity Theory proposes unique perspectives of organizational behaviour and leadership (Marion, 2008). The development of Complexity Theory has largely been interdisciplinary, generating contributions from physical, biological, environmental, social, psychological and economic sciences (Paley and Eva, 2011). Hence,

Complexity Theory cannot be seen as a single theory (Bodhanya, 2016b), rather it consists of underlying ideas and concepts that collectively constitute its framework (Gerwel Proches and Bodhanya, 2014, Morrison, 2010). This makes Complexity Theory quite versatile on an interpretative level where some, depending on the context and their views, articulate certain facets of the theory more prominently than others (Gorzeń-Mitka and Okręglicka, 2015, Hanson and Ford, 2010, Keshavarz et al., 2010). Nonetheless, the Complexity Theory perspective has proven useful for many who grapple with transformation where dynamics of turbulence and uncertain futures are involved (Matei and Antonie, 2015, Bodhanya, 2016b).

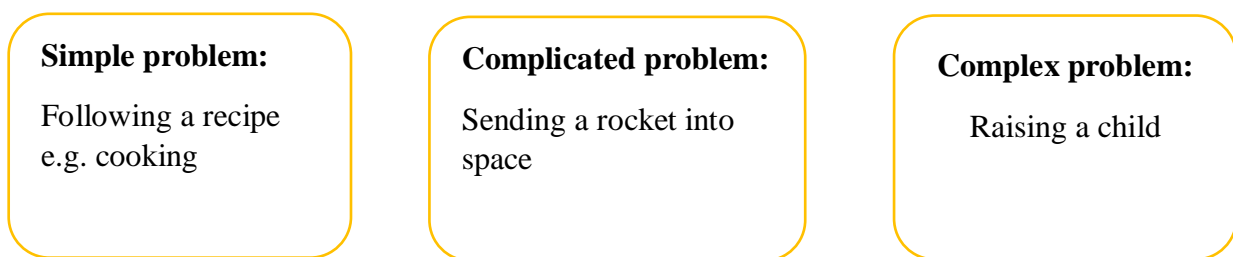


Figure 2.2: Adapted from Kimball and vanRyhn (2014).

The need for a complexity perspective in this research needs to be understood. As can be seen in figure 2.2, all problems do not present with the same level of complexity. The simple to complex continuum helps us understand why a complexity lens is needed when dealing with organizational challenges (Kimball and vanRyhn, 2014) in higher education institutions.

The ideas rooted in Complexity Theory emanate from earlier systems thinking and as such are not novel (Blomme, 2012). However, the concepts inherent in this framework take on particular meanings and therefore need clarification (Maguire et al., 2011). A systemic process studied through the lens of Complexity Theory is referred to as a Complex Adaptive System (Alaa and Fitzgerald, 2013), herein further referred to as CAS, and are found in all organizations. In contrast to mechanical non-living systems, CAS as social systems are likened to living biological organisms (Cilliers, 1998). A CAS therefore, may be understood as a network of interacting and interdependent agents that are connected by a common dynamic for the purpose of a mutual objective (Price, 2014). In other words, a CAS is a whole constituted by different interacting parts referred to as agents (Maguire et al., 2011). The interacting parts or agents are rule-bound in their behaviour and are continually influencing each other at any given time (Maguire et al., 2011). According to Olson and Eoyang (2001), a CAS is characterized by three basic principles: (a) order is emergent and not established by hierarchy, (b) the system's history cannot be reversed or changed, and (c) the system's future is mostly unpredictable.

A CAS could be analyzed at various levels, for instance at the cellular, individual, community, organizational, geographical, economic, political, cyber and indeed astronomical levels (Keshavarz et al., 2010, Waddock et al., 2015). Pascale (1999) also adds that a system may be complex, but not necessarily adaptive and therefore suggests that for an entity to be considered a CAS, it must adhere to the following principles:

- be comprised of many agents that interact in parallel, instead of being controlled in a hierarchical manner.
- the manner in which this interaction happens is constantly changing, emerging and evolving.
- adhere to the second law of thermodynamics, in that it will cease to exist if not replenished with energy.
- exhibit the capacity for pattern recognition in which some aspects of its future states can be leveraged from (Pascale, 1999).

In light of this view, a CAS has properties or characteristics through which leaders are able to conceptualize complex situations in order to understand how they behave and evolve over time (Rammel et al., 2007). These properties have been extended upon by researchers since the contributions made by Pascale, and are examined next.

2.7.2 The key properties of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS)

Non-linearity and feedback loops

Iñigo and Albareda (2016) explain that non-linearity refers to patterns that provide reiterative feedback loops based on the complex interconnections between the various components in the system. As a result of these feedback loops, new and sometimes improved patterns appear. These feedback loops create reiterative and recursive frameworks that seek improved solutions to achieve sustainability (Iñigo and Albareda, 2016).

Emergence

Emergence is a complicated, but very central concept in CAS (Matei and Antonie, 2015). A CAS displays the property of emergence, and could be interpreted in various ways (Bodhanya, 2016b). Emergence within the system arises as a result of the relationship between its various parts; those properties of emergence does not reside in the parts themselves (Bodhanya, 2009), i.e. it is not a result of cause-and-effect links, but rather emerges as a result of the interaction of these parts (Anderson, 1999, Blomme, 2012). By way of example, Keshavarz et al. (2010)

explain that no single neuron has the capacity to produce consciousness by itself, instead consciousness is an emergent property of complex networks of neurons in the brain system.

Furthermore, emergence also reflects the state of the system through self-organisation which serves as an indication of the order within the system. Through the process of emergence, the system itself emerges (Bodhanya, 2009). It is a process of constant creativity (Morrison, 2010). It is important to note that the precise outcomes cannot be dictated or prescribed into the system as emergence is not predictable. Homer-Dixon (2011) refers to this phenomenon as “living in a world of unknowns”, because a CAS exhibits novel properties that can be understood, even anticipated, but cannot be predicted with certainty (Bodhanya, 2016b).

Agents with schemata

A CAS is made up of various of agents that interact (Prewitt et al., 2011). Agents in social systems can be individuals, groups or coalitions of groups etc, which are parts of bigger systems in their own right (Keshavarz et al., 2010). These agents have cognitive structures referred to as schemata and influences its behaviour (Bodhanya, 2009). As the agents interact with each other, their schemata change (Paley and Eva, 2011). In a CAS, agents are connected to each other by feedback loops (Bodhanya, 2009, Anderson, 1999). Agents are semi-autonomous units in the systems that co-evolve over time. They utilise their schemata to scan the environment to determine appropriate responses in given situations (Bodhanya, 2009).

Recombination and system evolution

Bodhanya (2016b) states that in a CAS the systemic network of agents and the relationships between them may change, as a result of agents coming in and leaving the network and by doing so reorganize the system into new patterns of behaviour.

Self-organisation

The CAS has a tendency to gravitate towards a state of self-organisation (Trenholm and Ferlie, 2013). Self-organisation refers to the tendency of a CAS through which order within the system is generated (Morrison, 2010) when small sets of rules that generate complex behaviour are followed (Kimball and vanRyhn, 2014). This order emerges through the interplay between the various agents within the system and is not imposed from outside (Bodhanya, 2009, Bodhanya, 2016b). Thus, there is a level of control (Bodhanya, 2016b), but bureaucratic command and control is contested in the context of its dynamics (Gerwel Proches and Bodhanya, 2014). Stated differently, order emerges without the intervention of a central controller (Anderson, 1999, Keshavarz et al., 2010).

Co-evolution

Co-evolution refers to agents interactions with other agents who are themselves adapting and evolving. Agents interact within various hierarchical levels at the same time. Our artifacts are created through and with co-evolution (Bodhanya, 2009). The system as a whole is co-evolving with the macro-environment, where systems interact with systems (Bodhanya, 2016b).

Artifacts as (a kind of) agents

In social systems, the human creations such as infrastructure, machinery, theories or technological applications for instance, are agents in the sense that the human agents co-evolve with these artifacts (Bodhanya, 2016b). These artifacts and co-evolution creates new opportunities for action, which in turn may lead to the creation of newer artifacts (Bodhanya, 2016b).

Sensitive dependence on initial conditions

Kimball and vanRyhn (2014) state that in a CAS the relationships and connections between the various agents generate second and third order effects that can create massive change in a dissipative manner. Simply stated, simple or minor events or tweaks in the system, can have bigger and longer-lasting impacts (Kimball and vanRyhn, 2014). Therefore, it is not possible to forecast a prospective state of a system with any accuracy from a central position, because minor changes in initial conditions may lead to enormously different outcomes (Anderson, 1999, Bodhanya, 2009).

Path dependence

This property holds that outcomes within a given system often result due to the combinations of activities that occur over time. The history of a particular system has a maintaining influence on its current structure and dynamics (Bodhanya, 2009).

Co-evolution at the edge of chaos

Complexity theorists maintain that a CAS moves through three states: stability (stasis) on one end of the continuum and chaos on the other end, in between there is a state referred to as the edge of chaos (Kimball and vanRyhn, 2014). They argue that nothing new can emerge from systems that exhibit elevated levels of order and stability (Bodhanya, 2016b). If transformation and innovation is sought, then the systems needs to be exposed to generative complexity to create variation through which co-evolution can proceed and new order can manifest (Pascale, 1999). Thus, the edge of chaos refers to bounded instability, where elements of order and chaos

interact (Bodhanya, 2016b). It is a region that is paradoxical in that it has characteristics of stability and instability simultaneously (Bodhanya, 2016b). A CAS tends to move toward the edge of chaos when provoked by a complex demand (Bodhanya, 2009). In organisations that operate from this framework, disruption is deliberately created within work teams in line with this principle as a means of stimulating innovation. However, getting the balance right, in the strict view of this approach is not possible and maintaining a high degree of ethical responsibility is a difficult task (Bodhanya, 2016b). Some organisations deliberately design informal meeting spaces where workers from different departments could interact by chance that may result in unexpected collaborations (Kimball and vanRyhn, 2014). Such interactions and conversation would not have occurred during the normal course of their work structured by meetings and other formal agendas (Kimball and vanRyhn, 2014).

Fitness of landscape

The landscape represents contextual environment through which agents move continually shifts, metaphorically speaking. A move up the landscape represents an increase in fitness or capacity, and a move down the landscape represents a decrease in fitness or capacity (Bodhanya, 2009). Hence, the landscape is not static, but rather dynamic and leads to co-evolution between the agents and the environment at a micro-level (Bodhanya, 2016b).

Far-from-equilibrium

The system goes through fluctuations all the time (Bodhanya, 2016b). In a CAS equilibrium is a precursor to systemic death (Pascale, 1999). Adaptation is required for continued survival, in which the results are not always positive for all agents within the system (Keshavarz et al., 2010).

History

A CAS has networks of intelligence embedded and distributed within system which cannot be changed and will continually have an impact on the system (Bodhanya, 2009).

Egalitarianism

No agent can stand outside the system and understand the whole, although some agents have more influence than others in some ways (Bodhanya, 2016b). This in a sense heavily criticises the top-down authority models, where it is believed that managers and executives know everything about the organisation, what is best for it and are fully in control of it (Bodhanya, 2009). Therefore, a key aspect of a CAS is the general unpredictability of future states with relative certainty (Keshavarz et al., 2010).

When the basic premise of Complexity Theory and the characteristics of a CAS are understood, one can draw distinctions between the traditional versus complexity management paradigms, as illustrated below in table 2.2

Table 1. Adapted from Olmedo (2012)

Traditional paradigm	Complexity paradigm
Independence between the observer and the observed	Dependence between the observer and the observed
Systems are considered as closed and isolated structures	Systems are considered as open systems and connected, and they related to their environments
Systems are considered structures in equilibrium	Value is placed on disequilibrium as systems move between order and disorder
There is strong linear view where the whole is approximated as the sum of constituting parts	There is strong non-linear view where the whole is more than the sum of their parts
Systemic energy conservation as a consequence of systems being closed	The systemic energy is dissipated during relations with environment
Time is exogenous and external to the system which affords the systemic the ability to start over	Time is endogenous and internal to the system therefore starting over is never possible
The systems values order	The system values disorder

When understood and considered as a non-linear dynamical system, a CAS may present a tremendous shift in how social organizations and a phenomenon such as leadership are constructed (Bodhanya, 2016b). Complexity Theory allows one to examine the system and identify patterns and trends from a more holistic stance (Bodhanya, 2016b). In line with this view, Price (2014) highlights the benefits of taking a CAS approach to higher education institutions going through large scale transformation. Firstly, it allows such institutions to explain and make sense of change processes in ways that are emergent and places less emphasises on control and prediction of future states. And secondly, the leadership model developed out the complexity approach is a good fit for the VUCA context in which these institutions operate (Price, 2014).

2.7.3 Applying Complexity Theory to understand challenges in a higher education institution in South Africa

To illustrate the contextual properties of a CAS, consider the recent ‘fees must fall’ protest within the higher education sector in South Africa as a case in point.

- I. As stated by Olson and Eoyang (2001), the three basic principles within the higher education sector must be applied. Thus, although the sector has formal hierarchical structures that institute legislation and policies for the formal control of higher education institutions, the ‘fees must fall’ protests has shown that true order lies in the hands of the many lower-level agents within the system. This order is emergent, therefore nobody knew in which manner the protests and discussions concerning it will present until it happened. Second, the political and economic history and the impact it had within the sector cannot be reversed. Hence, the relevance of certain political standpoints surrounding the protests long after certain political milestones came to pass. Thirdly, despite vigorous efforts to craft long-term strategic plans concerning the future of the sector, its future to a large extent remains uncertain due to the many dynamic facets that are involved (Olson and Eoyang, 2001).
- II. **Non-linearity and feedback loops** – the sector is an open system that affects and is affected by its environment. Some of the several factors that could be taken into account were that the protests erupted at a time when the country was recovering from a difficult economic downturn, high-level government officials were implicated in state capture and corruption, and unemployment reached unprecedented levels.
- III. **Agents with schemata** – the protests involved various individuals, groups and coalitions all with their own cognitive and value structures that ultimately played a role in how they participated in the process.
- IV. **Emergence** – through the dynamic interaction of the different agents within the sector certain events emerged e.g. the re-deployment of the Minister of Higher Education, violent protests, revised safety policies on campuses, forming of new alliances and free education for designated groups. Through this view, these events could not have been predicted, nor did the capacity to create these events reside in a single agent within the system. Interestingly, many turned their attention to culprits who instigated the situation. Instead, through the dynamic interaction of the various agents, these events emerged.
- V. **Recombination and system evolution** – during the protests certain agents joined the process while others left. This ultimately changed the way agents interacted with each other and formed new patterns of behaviour within the system. For example, when the protests started initially at one particular university, there appeared to be unity amongst the dominant racial groups who collectively articulated a dominant standpoint. However, after certain political parties joined the protests and created their own political narrative, the protests in some areas become more racial in its agenda and this prior unity was no

longer as apparent. It could also be argued that this sparked a new debate concerning other vital resources within the country e.g. the expropriation of land issue.

- VI. **Self-organisation** – protest action can only be governed on simple rules, e.g. on this day, at from this place we are going to march towards another place to hand over a signed petition to this person. What happens throughout the time of the protest cannot be planned-out in detail, what people will say, feel or what they will do is ultimately a dynamic that must self-organize through bottom-up interactions based on these simple rules.
- VII. **Co-evolution** – It may be speculated that some of the agents that were involved in the protests have been changed forever e.g. individual agents may have been affected by the violence physically or psychologically, institutions as agents may no longer view students in the same manner and will craft their policies accordingly etc.
- VIII. **Artifacts as (a kind of) agents** – concerning the protests several human creations were created as a result of the protests e.g. legislation concerning access to education was amended, state-of-the-art resources that were destroyed could not be replaced to the same degree as before. These artifacts were crafted, but will in future also craft the agents in some way who were responsible for its creation, whether these artifacts become better or worse remains to be seen.
- IX. **Sensitive dependence on initial conditions** – it is not uncommon in today's times that a simple Tweet, Facebook post or Whatsapp message that goes viral can play a major role in events such as the 'fees must fall' protests. This can be seen as a small event that gains momentum through the dynamic interactions within the system that ultimately leads to a massive event at a later stage.
- X. **Path dependence** – on retrospective analysis of the outcomes of the protests it can now be understood that the general direction through which this system moved was a result of the combination of certain activities over time.
- XI. **Co-evolution at the edge of chaos** – this was a particularly important property of the 'fees must fall' protests. While the fees and accessibility issues within the sector are far from resolved, certain transformative processes have resulted such as the free education for designated groups. From this view, it may be argued that no transformation would have been possible, had the system not experienced bounded instability where elements of chaos and order interacted. This does not imply that the breaking of the law or suspension of academic programs must be supported, merely that a certain amount of tension is needed within a system for creative breakthroughs to manifest.

- XII. **Fitness of landscape** – during the period the protests were on-going the fitness landscape within the sector was low. This means the sector was not performing and many agents were burdened financially, psychologically and lost time they can never get back. However, the fitness landscape often changes and may reach peaks were these conditions are reversed for other agents.
- XIII. **Far-from-equilibrium** – during time of mass protests there is often calls for calm and order to be restored. This is needed, but the sector as a CAS must not reach a static position where no adaption occurs, for this will result in greater damage. The sector must continue to go through fluctuations that will ensure it adapts and survives.
- XIV. **History** – the past as well as the period of protest will remain part of the sector as it moves into the future. While dominant narratives have emerged, this history will be stored in the collective memories of all the agents within the sector, both human and artificial.
- XV. **Egalitarianism** – it is clear some agents, due to the structure of the sector will have more influence than others within the system. However, no single agent can get an overall perspective of the system without losing finer nuances of the reality of that system. Therefore, there will be many perspectives of the sector concerning the fees must fall protests. Some perspectives may be clearer and more intelligible than others. However, nobody will be able to claim that their view is the most correct or factual view.

As stated previously, and illustrated in this example, Complexity Theory through the conceptualisation of a system as a CAS allows for the analysis of that system in a much more holistic and dynamic perspective (Cilliers, 1998, Homer-Dixon, 2011). This has huge implications for VLD, as will be discussed in the section below.

2.7.4 Complexity Leadership Theory as a framework for vertical leader development

The Complexity Theory perspective is still relatively new in the field of leadership theory, but it has produced an important perspective that enables the understanding of complex organisational behaviour (Baltaci and Balci, 2017). A particular implication that Complexity Theory had for the field of leadership studies was its reconstruction of how leadership was defined and understood in an era of complexity (Olmedo, 2012). Hence, Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) is an offshoot of Complexity Theory (Price, 2014), and challenges the relevance of top-down leadership paradigms as the most efficient forms of leadership in the current turbulent climate (Burchell, 2012).

In CLT, the unit of analysis is the interactive dynamics of a CAS rooted within the context of a larger system (Uhl-Bien and Marion, 2009) as opposed to the individual-follower based relationship as has been the case in much of the traditional leadership theories (Best, 2014). It is a framework for leadership that emphasises the enabling of continuous adaptive learning, creativity and capacity of a CAS in a knowledge-based era (Burchell, 2012, Price, 2014). The CLT view asserts that when individuals interact with each other on a local level as a means of responding to everyday pressures and opportunities in the environment, innovation, enhanced performance and organizational fitness emerges (Arena and Uhl-Bien, 2016). The function of leading therefore emerges from the dynamic interactions in the system, as opposed to imposing itself in pre-defined hierarchical manner (Olmedo, 2012). Be that as it may, CLT does acknowledge the need for centralised control structures in organizations, as long as it serves an administrative and enabling function for CAS dynamics and is not seen as the fundamental and total leadership function (Burchell, 2012). Therefore, the CLT framework includes three leadership functions: administrative, adaptive and enabling functions (Burchell, 2012). These three leadership functions represent the needed and unavoidable interaction between an organization's bureaucratic and administrative functions, and its emergent, informal CAS dynamics (Marion, 2008, Uhl-Bien and Marion, 2009).

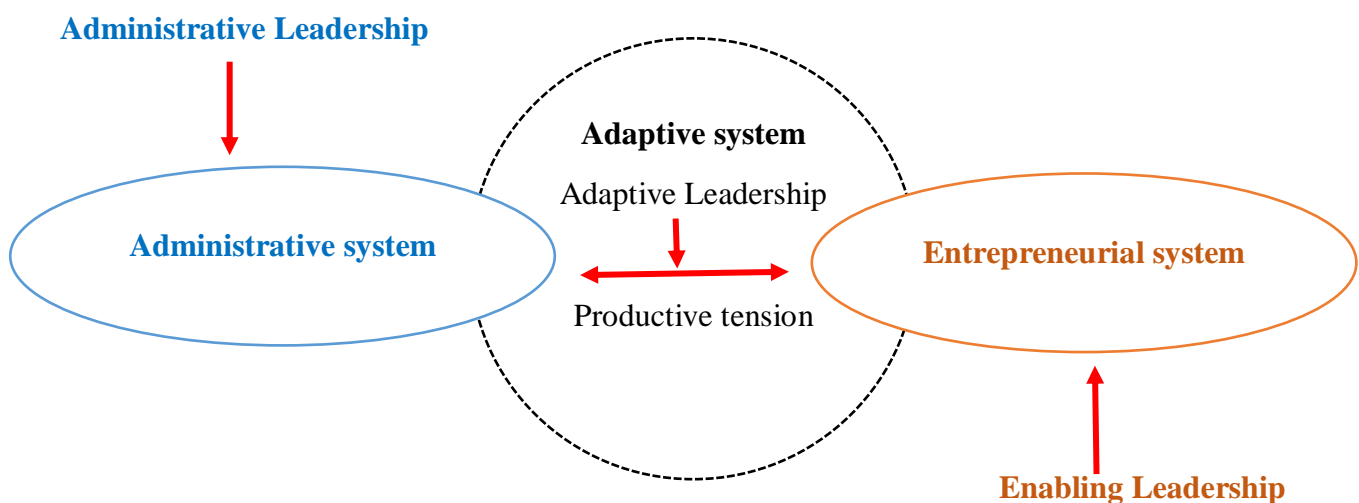


Figure 2.3. Adapted from Gunawardana (2015).

The administrative leadership function resembles the bureaucratic component where individuals in managerial roles plan, structure, acquire resources, coordinate and manage organizational activities (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). An essential aspect of this function is the top-down authority to make decisions, but within a CLT framework does so consistent with the organization's need for creativity, learning and adaptability (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

The adaptive leadership function is the interactive, collaborative dynamic that produces adaptive results in a social system (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). This emerges out of the struggles between the various agents in the CAS over competing needs, preferences or ideas and results in collaboration of people, thinking, technologies and efforts as they strive to re-position themselves due to the tension (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007, Burchell, 2012).

The enabling leadership component seeks to encourage conditions in which adaptive leadership can thrive, by fostering interaction and interdependency and by providing adaptive tension (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007, Burchell, 2012).

While CLT does not advocate the dominant stance of the individual leader as that resembles too much of the disfavoured top-down leadership paradigms, it does nonetheless acknowledge the role that individual agents at management level play in a CAS (Schneider and Somers, 2006). Under the CLT paradigm, there is a qualitatively different role managers have, serving as tags (Schneider and Somers, 2006) and moving the organization toward the edge of chaos (Boal and Schultz, 2007). Tagging is the mechanism that facilitates the signalling of differences between agents and acting as mediators between them (Boal and Schultz, 2007). It is about actions and outcomes and not necessarily positions (Schneider and Somers, 2006). Often such individual leaders do not have formal authority and engage in this role temporarily in a conscious manner or it may emerge unexpectedly (Schneider and Somers, 2006). Under CLT, leaders cannot know or control the future, so strategic complex leadership involves creating conditions that enable unspecified future states, rather than envisaging such future states (Olmedo, 2012). Moreover, leaders in organizations are challenged to relinquish ideas of individually fostered leadership and to embrace leadership as a collective organizational phenomenon (Olmedo, 2012).

CLT has implications for leadership (system-level) and leader (individual level) development (Clarke, 2013). The implications of CLT for vertical leader development at the individual level are therefore, that new skills are required that would enable individuals to promote these complex change dynamics instead of stifling them (Olmedo, 2012).

The contributions of VanVelsor (2008), Clarke (2013) and Olmedo (2012) pertaining the development of unique leader skills and behaviours that are relevant for VLD are reviewed here. Each highlight unique knowledge and skill areas in which individual leaders much develop that will support the effective implementation of CLT in organizations (VanVelsor, 2008, Olmedo, 2012, Clarke, 2013). While there is a degree of overlap, their recommendations are discussed separately here to capture finer nuances.

VanVelsor (2008) proposes the enhancing of interactive dynamics as the main focus of individual leader development. It is argued that this will enhance the likelihood that leaders in a particular organization will be comfortable with and act as drivers of complexity leadership. At an individual level the most essential components of leader development, according to VanVelsor (2008) includes:

- **Facilitating interactions to promote probability of emergence** – this component is geared towards dealing with unpredictable outcomes. Essential behaviour of the complex leader therefore is orchestrating adaptive conflict and creating a holding environment that fosters psychological safety as part of the culture.
- **Managing and developing networks** - managers can be coached to let go of their control orientation and learn to adopt a more facilitative stance that will ultimately increase self-awareness and create behaviour change.
- **Fostering and cultivating interdependencies** - creating perspective shifts within groups can enable the understanding of boundaries can be effectively utilised by enhancing collaboration, but also understanding what may frustrate it.

Development in these facets of leading require a shift in thinking, self-awareness and the ability to change the behaviour of the leader through vertical development (VanVelsor, 2008).

The areas of leader development according to Clarke (2013) include:

- **Supporting autocatalysis** – through their thinking and behaviour, leaders have to organise the work environment, so that it facilitates interactions among ensembles. This may include job design, delegating more authority and empowering team members by providing resources that facilitate network building. Team members need to be given an opportunity to develop problem-solving and conflict management skills to resolve such challenges at a local level.
- **Supporting shared leadership** – the leader's formal roles is that of an administrator, coordinator and coach, instead of being the central controller. The leader needs to focus on building social capital and improving the quality of the interactions between team members, so that self-organisation and other adaptive behaviour can manifest.
- **Developing the system's network** – the complex leader must develop skills in effectively building and managing systemic networks that emphasise collaboration.
- **Supporting shared meaning-making** – while adaptive systems self-organise, there remains a need to steer development on a desired track. Therefore, key to this process is the leader being able to engage in sense-making and sense-giving with team members to

encourage shared understandings that may serve as a basis for managing tension in the system.

- **Identifying barriers to information flows** – leader emergence has been associated with greater access to information in the system. Complex leaders have to resolve obstructions to knowledge sharing in the system.
- **Fostering the positive value of tension** – the complex leader should garner adaptive tension in the system to move the system towards the edge of chaos where emergence occurs. It requires creating a platform and a climate where divergent views may be shared in a conducive manner.
- **Building social capital** – the complex leader focuses less on motivating teams and more on promoting knowledge transfer, shared meaning-making and building trust and mutual respect amongst members. This emphasises the development of the leader's relational skills.

While Clarke's recommendations for leader development seem more instructive, they do place emphasis and personal change of mental models, as outlined in vertical development (Petrie, 2014). The contribution by Olmedo (2012) takes on a more psychological stance, bearing closer resemblance with the vertical development underpinnings suggested by Petrie (2014). Olmedo (2012) regards the following as vertical skills that the complex leader must develop:

- **Complex seeing** – reality is perceived through the leader's personal mental model, this requires that leaders become conscious of their own dispositions to avoid falling into a repetitive cycle of behaviours based on hidden unconscious perceptions. Complex vision allows the leader insight into this process and how to act with this knowledge in mind. This means to a great extent, allowing others in the system to offer contributions and solutions that extend beyond what is consistent with the leader's own perceptions. Complex seeing thus, will result in enhanced sense-giving concerning the system.
- **Complex thinking** – leaders face a complex reality and linear cause-and-effect predictability is not possible at the best of times, thus the future cannot be controlled. Hence, for thinking to become complex, it cannot remain linear. Rather, thinking must be paradoxical and creative. Thus, leaders have to go through a process of development that would enable them to think, process emotions and behave in complex ways that is based on circular causality.
- **Complex feeling** – the complex leader must harness positive emotions that will allow progressive energy to become part of the system and encourage self-organisation and positive interaction amongst members.

- **Complex knowing** – this skill is based on the premise of cultivating a common language and symbols for enhanced communication during periods of uncertainty and following of simple rules that leads to quicker and better decision-making processes. Complex knowing essentially develops from improved perception as with complex seeing.
- **Complex acting** – this ability comes with acknowledging the benefit of the whole system, not just what is desired for the self. Through complex acting one shows concern for ethical behaviour and what is in the best interest of members of the system.
- **Complex trusting** – trusting the natural processes inherent in Complexity Theory, and taking advantage of the creative potential brought by moments of disorder. This facilitates being flexible in individual and organisational behaviour to navigate through organisational turbulence.
- **Complex being** – the complex learner is open to a life of continuous learning and evolving, with a specific emphasis on relational being. This implies both horizontal and vertical development to overcome barriers to progress. It allows for one's complexity of being human to emerge.

While CLT presents new challenges for VLD, the approach has attracted critique (Weberg, 2012). Brown (2011) contends that CLT is not a cure-all for organizational leadership problems and will never be. Concerning VLD as informed by CLT, the approach is still a newcomer to the field and requires an on-going empirical research base (Brown, 2011). Even so, CLT will continue to require complementary viewpoints to fully chart the leadership terrain (Brown, 2011). Moreover, for others the concepts promoted by CLT cannot be practically implemented with ease as these skills can be very difficult to process, articulate and demonstrate (Weberg, 2012). Therefore, given that it goes against the philosophy of CLT to be prescriptive, implementing these ideas practically in organisations presents an on-going challenge for many who continue to see it as unattainable (Osborn and Hunt, 2007). Fenwick (2010) further cautions that notwithstanding some of the benefits of complexity science that inform people's mental shifts during times of profound change, there are limitations to this approach that must be taken into account. These limitations present themselves in conflicting ontologies, power dynamics and organizational politics (Fenwick, 2010). With respect to conflicting ontologies, it is argued that Complexity Theory aims to inform the subject of leadership without the belief that a leader is required in a CAS. Concerning power dynamics and politics, the limitations of Complexity Theory to address these issues has been highlighted (Fenwick, 2010).

2.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

It is clear from the above discussion on vertical leader development practices in higher education, that the role of leadership has been complicated by the increasing complexities in the world that challenges how leaders respond. The higher education context in South Africa is not exempted from the above. In fact, being a critical sector in the country's economy, it necessitates that through L&D strategic functions the growth of leaders be prioritized. While there has been steady movement towards leadership development over the last two decades, the importance of leader development still cannot be underplayed. Especially, VLD that concerns changing the personally held mental models that influences how leaders execute their roles. However, VLD being a fairly recently coined approach, lacks a coherent theoretical framework along with an evidence base. A complexity leadership approach to the development of leaders it is argued holds promise in this regard. In the next chapter the research methodology used in this study is presented.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter explored the literature on VLD in higher education institutions. This chapter outlines the methodological approach followed in this research. According to Sreejesh et al. (2014), business research may be defined as a systematic and objective process of gathering, recording and analysing data that provide information to guide sound business decisions. While non-business related research often aspires to generate new knowledge, an additional focus of business research is that it is often used to solve various problems that arise in the organization (Sreejesh et al., 2014). However, the manner in which scientific business research is conducted is complex and continually evolving, hence it is not surprising that researchers have many methodological choices when embarking on such an endeavour (Gill and Johnson, 2010). Nonetheless, it is important to understand that scientific research must have a research design with detailed procedures that are aligned with the nature of the research problem, its aims and objectives, the context as well as the targeted audience as determined by the researcher (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Figure 3.4 depicts the business research process.

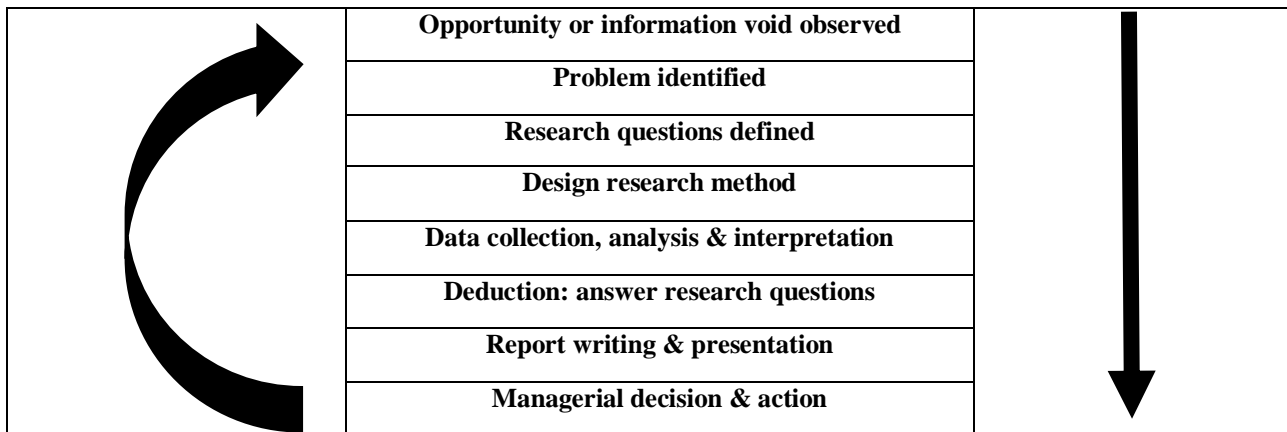


Figure 3.4. Adapted from Sekaran and Bougie (2016)

3.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

The researched aimed to investigate the practices of vertical leader development in a higher education institution. The primary objective was as follows:

- To investigate the practices of vertical leader development at a higher education institution in North West Province.

The secondary objectives for the study therefore were to:

- To describe the role and importance of vertical leader development practices in a higher education institution.
- To identify and discuss the challenges associated with vertical leader development practices as experienced by the leaders at a higher education institution.
- To provide recommendations on how to deal with challenges posed by vertical leader development practices in a higher education institution.

The research questions guiding this study were:

- What is the role and importance of vertical leader development practices in a higher education institution?
- What challenges are associated with vertical leader development practices as experienced by the leaders at a higher education institution?
- How can vertical leader development practices be improved in a higher education institution?

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is the strategy of inquiry that outlines the underlying assumptions of the research and includes practical aspects of research design and data collection procedures (Flick, 2007). Given the nature of the research aims, questions and objectives a qualitative approach was adopted for the study.

3.3.1 Qualitative research in leadership studies

The research aim was to investigate the practices of vertical leader development in a higher education institution, as experienced by a sample of senior managers at a higher education, therefore a qualitative approach was chosen as the best way to achieve this.

The qualitative method allows researchers to gain an in-depth perspective into matters that affect human behavior, such as leadership for instance (Klenke et al., 2016). The qualitative approach reflects more on the why and how of a multitude of issues such as organizational culture, value systems, attitudes, behaviour, motivation, etc. It is multi-focal in its reasoning, exploring, questioning, and answering (Taylor et al., 2015). Therefore, it is extremely useful in business research pertaining to decision-making and policy formulation, enhancing communication, and facilitating change (Walle, 2014).

Qualitative methods as a research strategy emphasizes textual data rather than the quantification of data (Hammersley, 2013). It encompasses an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the research context where phenomena are studied in their natural settings and meaning is created through interpretations (Willig, 2008b).

Klenke et al. (2016), maintains that leadership studies research has in the past predominantly embraced quantitative methodologies, such as surveys and experiments to understand leadership problems and devise solutions that can be scientifically tested, verified and replicated across contexts. However, while acknowledging the significance of the quantitative approach where appropriate, steady advances in leadership studies research have exposed the weakness of the quantitative method when trying to uncover the complex, deeper meanings leaders and followers ascribe to important processes e.g. culture, and why organizations succeed or fail in activities in which the human element is critical (Klenke et al., 2016). Therefore, the use of qualitative methods has become a well-established approach as a mode of inquiry in leadership research (Ospina, 2004). Ospina (2004) states that the benefits of the qualitative approach for leadership research specifically include:

- To explore complex phenomena that cannot be studied directly through a quantitative approach.
- To understand a phenomenon from the perspective of the actors who experience it, instead of from an outsider's perspective.
- Allowing the researcher to follow unexpected themes during research and explore these effectively.
- Enhanced sensitivity to contextual factors.
- It offers the ability to explore symbolic meanings and ideas that are socially constructed.
- It opens up new questions that ultimately provide opportunities that can subsequently be studied quantitatively by means of empirical testing and longitudinal studies.

For the reasons outlined above, and in an effort to shed new light on leader development practices in a higher education institution going through large-scale transformation from a complexity theory perspective, this research is grounded in a qualitative, exploratory and descriptive, contextual and inductive approach.

3.3.2 The research paradigm perspective

The paradigm perspective is in essence a worldview, or framework of beliefs, principles and methods within which the research is conducted. It is a declaration of the researcher's scientific beliefs, specifically with reference to ontology and epistemology (Hammersley, 2013). The

research was grounded in the interpretivist perspective. Interpretive research emphasises the subjective experiences of people and contextualises the meanings and perspectives people create in relation to a phenomenon (Ponelis, 2015). The interpretive researcher assumes that reality consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world and it is only accessible through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings (Ponelis, 2015, Khan, 2014). No pre-determined variables or hypotheses are defined, in order for the full complexity of human sense-making to emerge (Chowdhury, 2014). From an interpretivist perspective it is argued that value free data cannot be obtained, because the researcher uses their own preconceptions to guide the process of discovery, and through the interaction with the human participants of the inquiry there is a possibility that the perceptions of both parties may change (Chowdhury, 2014). In leadership research, the shift toward an interpretivist approach emanates from the view that leadership in essence is socially constructed through actors who see it as a set of activities (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012). Following interpretivist assumptions, not only has new understandings of how leadership is constructed emerged, but also the ambiguities and uncertainties that are associated with it (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012). The interpretivist perspective dovetails with the Complexity Theory approach to organizational leadership as these approaches both support the narrative mode of thought, involve recursiveness, non-linearity, sensitive dependence on initial conditions, unpredictability and emergence (Stacey, 2010).

3.3.3 Study setting: Brief organizational profile

The research was conducted at one of South Africa's leading higher education institutions that is based in the North West Province, but also has smaller campuses in Gauteng and Eastern Cape, as well as satellite campuses for distance learning across the SADC region. The institution offers a wide variety of academic and professional training programmes, distance learning, entrepreneurial learning, niche-focused research entities and sport participation from amateur to provincial, national and elite professional levels.

The institution officially came into being on 1 January 2004 as part of the South African government's plan to transform higher education. In this particular case, the implication was that a historically white university and a historically black university merged to create a new unitary multi-campus university where South Africans from all walks of life have come together. The merger meant that the institution would operate with a single set of policies, systems and standards, driven by a set of constitutionally based values, promoting unity in diversity, developing its own brand and identity and a unique institutional culture based on the unity and value system of the university. In its first ten years since the merger, the institution has enacted

many of its transformational policies and will likely continue to do so in the future (retrieved from organizational archives).

The institution has a staff compliment of 6214 people. Its diversity composition puts Asian staff at 1.30%, White staff at 61.89%, Coloured staff at 4.13% and African staff at 32.66%. These figures are inclusive of academic staff.

The institution is governed by a federal council whose function is to legally operate under an institutional statute gazetted by the Honourable Minister of Higher Education. Under the statute clear terms of reference are mandated for governance structures, office bearers, employees, students as well as qualifications and awards (GovernmentGazzette, 2017). Council members are internally and externally appointed through election processes.

The institution's executive management structure has recently been re-structured and as seen in figure 5.

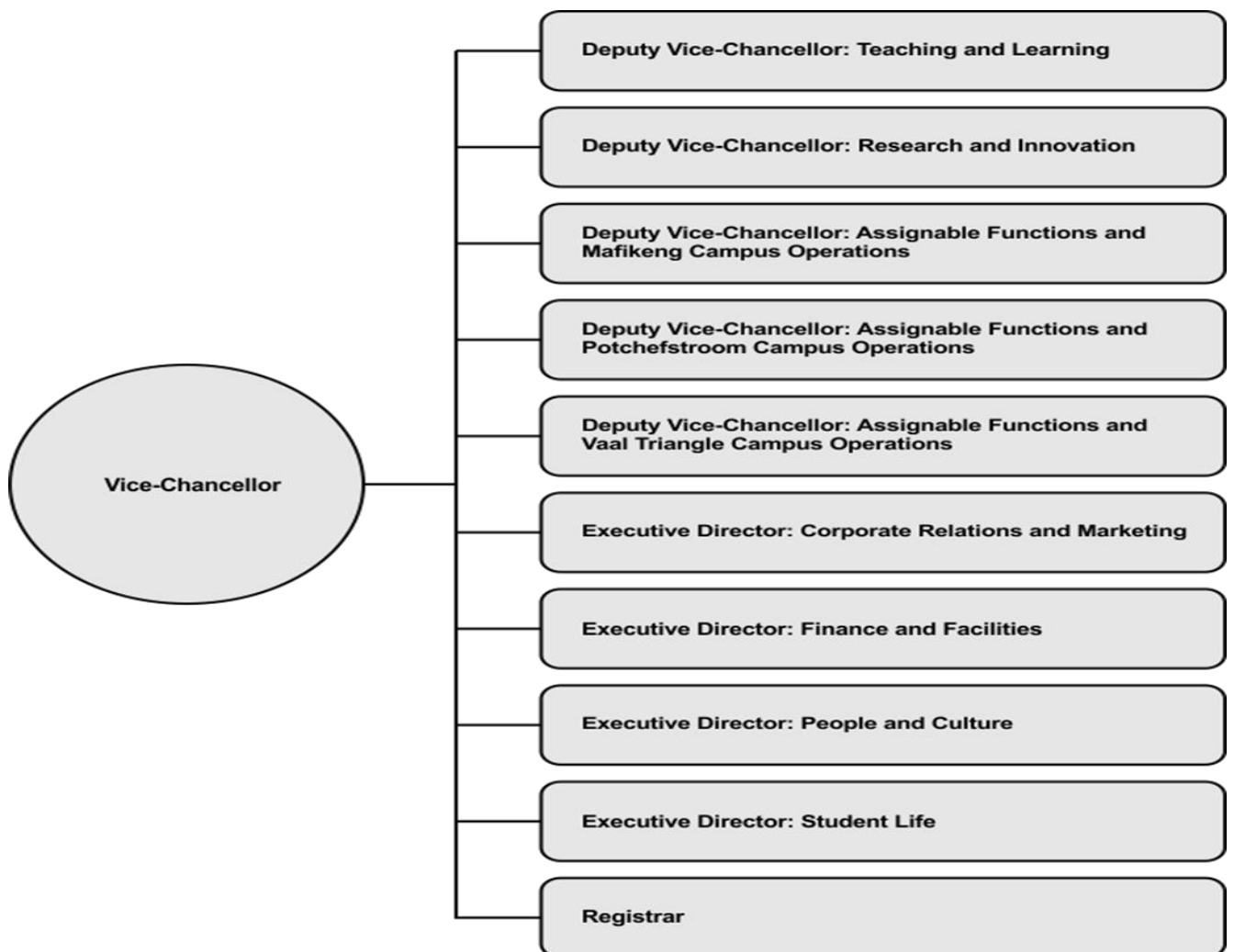


Figure 3.5 Obtained from the institution's website

The institution is comprised of eight faculties, including faculties of Education, Economic and Management Sciences, Health Sciences, Humanities, Theology and Engineering. The institution's recent re-structuring process concerning staffing positions has extended to middle management and as such included the positions of deans, deputy deans as well as school and research directors. An example of an academic faculty management is depicted in figure 6.

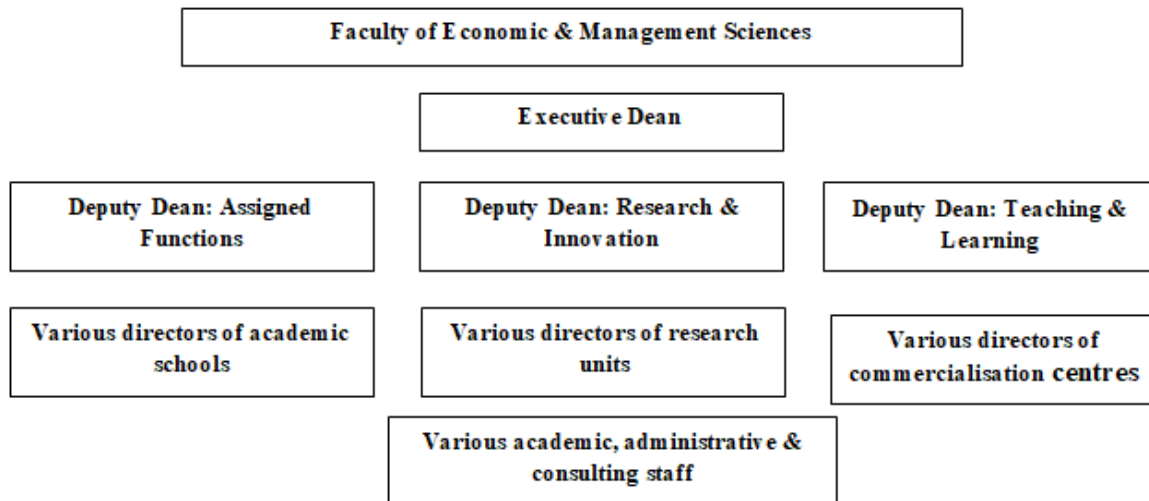


Figure 3.6 Adapted organogram of an academic structure

3.3.4 Study design: Interpretive Description

The research design can be seen as the architectural structure of the study, through which the researcher plans, structures and executes the research (Flick, 2007). Although, for the qualitative researcher the design remains more flexible as the researcher does not yet know what s/he does not know. Hence, a degree of flexibility in design is necessary both before and during the actual research process (Taylor et al., 2015). In order to address the outcomes and the research questions, the research project was designed as an interpretive description study.

An interpretive description as a research strategy refers to an inductive approach that creates ways of understanding complex phenomena that yields applications as well as implications (Thorne et al., 2004, Thorne et al., 1997, Hunt, 2009). Originally, this design was regarded as a deviation from the more traditional methodologies in applied health contexts where the objective was to uncover compelling and complex new knowledge for patients with various illness experiences (Thorne et al., 2004). Consistent with views of Hibbert et al. (2017), that research has showed renewed interest in the complex, contextual and relational nature of leadership, the researcher asserts that interpretive descriptions has much to offer in a business context. This kind of research would concentrate on the experiences of individuals as they develop through and

beyond their formal education into roles where they are called upon to enact leadership (Hibbert et al., 2017).

According to Thorne et al. (2004), interpretive descriptions acknowledge the contextual nature of human experience and therefore in terms of research design is grounded on the following underpinnings:

- There are multiple constructed realities that can only be studied holistically. Reality is thus complex, contextual, constructed, and ultimately subjective.
- The researcher and the respondent interact to influence one another.
- The process is inductive and while theory can be enriched, no priori theory can encompass the complexity of what is encountered during the research.

Furthermore, interpretive descriptions create a sense-making structure for the peculiarities and variations that inevitably occur in leadership so that the development of new knowledge can be applied without losing methodological integrity (Burnett and Corlett, 2017).

3.3.5 The population and sample of the study

The population for this research are senior managers at a higher education institution. This group was specifically identified as leader development practices involve and affect this population directly (Frizzell et al., 2016). Moreover, they are seen to have tacit knowledge about the organization and the industry that could add value to this research.

In research, a sample is small subset that is representative of the larger research population in which the researcher is interested (Bloor and Wood, 2006). Hunt (2009) maintains that within an interpretive description design, the most suitable form of recruitment is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is categorised as a non-probability method of sampling, in which the judgement of the researcher or a knowledgeable informant is relied on when selecting individuals to participate in the research (Given, 2008b). Purposive sampling is a very commonly used sampling strategy in qualitative studies, because only a limited number of participants can serve as primary data sources due to the nature of research design and the specific participants recruited are deemed best suited to achieve the research objectives (Given, 2008b). The gatekeeper for the study who holds the position of learning and development manager assisted with the recruitment of participants. The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied as follows:

Inclusion criteria:

- The employee will at least have to hold a senior management position as per the organizational structure.
- In the case of the institution being studied, the positions of senior manager, acting director, director, deputy dean, executive dean or executive director were suitable for inclusion.
- The participant must be knowledgeable about or have had exposure to a leader development program offered at the institution previously.

Exclusion criteria:

- Employees of the institution not in a formal senior management position.

A total number of 80 potential candidates were contacted of which 15 participants who responded were recruited for the study.

When deciding on how many participants are enough for the study, the concept of data saturation becomes important in qualitative research (Guest et al., 2016). The implication of failing to reach data saturation is that the quality of the research and veracity concerning the content validity of the research is impeded (Fusch and Ness, 2015). To complicate matters, Fusch and Ness (2015) maintain that there is no one size fits all category to establish when data saturation has been reached. The complexity of the data, researcher experience and the number of analysts reviewing the data are all factors to be considered (Guest et al., 2016). Nonetheless, meta-analyses have found that for qualitative studies using semi-structured interviews as a means of data collection, patterns of data saturation have noted within the sixth interview (Guest et al., 2016). Although, consensus regarding saturation currently, taken into consideration the cautions above, stands at twelve plus one interviews (Guest et al., 2016). The research findings as stated, in conjunction with the research ethics committee (this may vary from committee to committee) may advise as to the minimum number of participants needed for the data collection process.

In table 2 below, the demographic details of the respondents are displayed.

Table 3: Participant demographic details

Respondent	Age Range	Gender	Ethnicity	Current position	Organisational division	Number of subordinates
R1	30-35	Female	White	Senior Manager	Support	16
R2	50-55	Male	White	Executive Dean	Academic	460
R3	50-55	Male	White	Director	Support	24
R4	45-50	Female	White	Director	Academic	67
R5	56-60	Male	White	Executive Dean	Academic	432
R6	45-50	Female	White	Director	Academic	16
R7	40-45	Male	Black	Deputy Dean	Academic	250
R8	40-41	Male	Black	Deputy Dean	Academic	46
R9	35-40	Male	Black	Acting Director	Academic	18
R10	50-55	Male	Black	Director	Support	37
R11	60-65	Male	White	Director	Academic	70
R12	40-45	Female	Black	Director	Support	6
R13	40-45	Female	White	Director	Academic	8
R14	50-55	Male	Black	Director	Academic	11
R15	40-45	Male	White	Director	Support	7

3.3.6 Data collection

Data collection is the process of systematically recording information relevant to the research process (Sreejesh et al., 2014). Hence, data serves as is basis of the research study (Yin, 2011). In qualitative research, data is most often associated with texts, while at times visual as well as audible sources are also considered data (Given, 2008) Hence, when researchers would like to understand what people are thinking, feeling and doing, they ask them to relate in any of these forms of communication (Given, 2008). Interviews, especially when conducted face-to face has by far been the most popular method of qualitative data collection (Lechuga, 2012). For this study, semi-structured interviews as a data collection tool were deemed relevant and in line with the research questions, objectives and the design employed.

3.3.6.1 Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interviews consists of open-ended questions that are developed in line with the research questions and objectives (Köse, 2017). The researcher developed a semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix 2) with a few main questions and sub-questions that were approved by the university’s proposal and ethics committees, as well as the ethics committee of

the organization under analysis. Semi-structured interviews has a partially flexible structure in that the researcher may use relevant probes when eliciting information from respondents (Köse, 2017).

In terms of the research procedure, the researcher personally conducted all interviews face-to-face with all respondents in a private and quiet office and made use of digital voice recorder to capture the responses. As an aid, the research made written notes during the interviews to capture the tone of the respondents and to capture any idiosyncrasies that may enrich the data that would otherwise not have been capture by the audio recordings. The interviews were on average between 25 and 45 minutes. The audio recordings were subsequently transcribed by the researcher and this formed the primary textual data of the study.

3.3.7 Data analysis

The data analysis phase of the research involves the complex process of interpreting, making sense of and explaining the textual data that emerged from the semi-structured interviews (Gibson and Brown, 2009). Numerous methods of data analysis may be considered such as thematic content analysis, constant comparison and pattern matching for example (Ponelis, 2015). Regardless of which method of data analysis was followed, researchers much make the procedure followed as transparent as possible to ensure the rigour and integrity of the results is maintained (Ponelis, 2015).

3.3.7.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis as a method of data analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was adopted. This is a commonly used qualitative method in behavioural sciences that offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data (Madurai, 2017). Thematic analysis follows an inductive process where the themes generated are embedded in the data itself, as opposed to pre-determined pre-conceptions (Clarke and Braun, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2006), outline the following procedure:

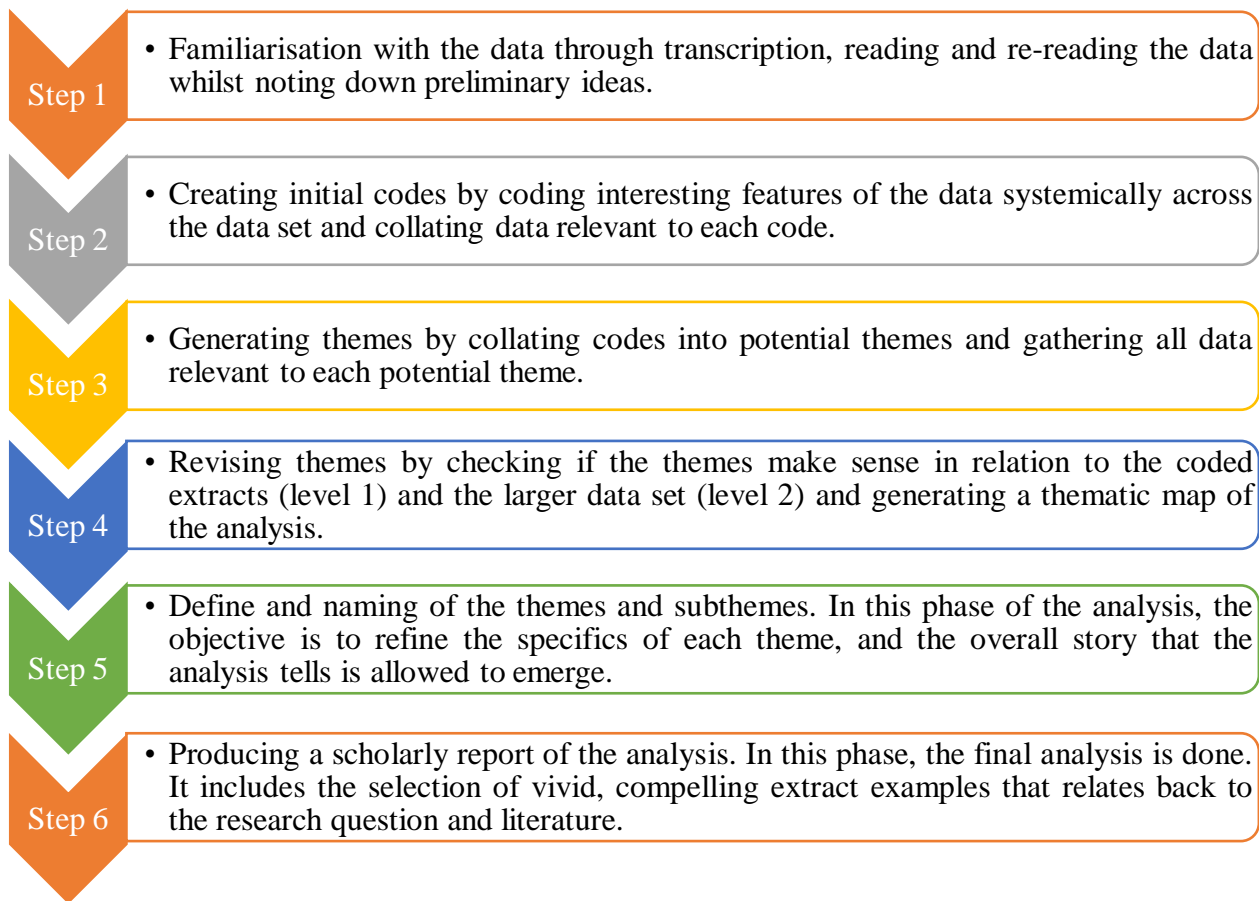


Figure 3.7 Adapted from (Braun and Clarke, 2006, Clarke and Braun, 2013)

3.3.8 Strategy to ensure trustworthiness of the qualitative research process

In this study reliability, validity and objectivity are addressed in line with the procedures for quality and rigour control in qualitative research. To ensure the quality of the research, the criteria suggested by (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) was applied to ensure trustworthiness of the process.

Credibility is an essential aspect of rigour control in qualitative research and represents what internal validity is to quantitative methods (Johnson and Waterfield, 2004). As such, credibility is concerned with how congruent the findings are with reality as interpreted by the researcher through his experience as the research instrument (Madurai, 2017). In line with the interpretive research paradigm chosen for the study, the researcher was the primary instrument for collecting and analysing the data (Flick, 2007). Firstly, being a registered clinical psychologist the researcher is experienced in interviewing and interpreting people's experiences. Moreover, the researcher developed competency in the theoretical framework on which the study was grounded by reading the literature for months prior to the data collection. Secondly, careful selection of the population and sampling needed to be considered (Johnson and Waterfield, 2004). The population chosen is directly affected by the concerns addressed in the research questions and

through purposive sampling the most suitable participants were chosen for the study. Finally, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews until data saturation occurred (Modiba, 2008), and thereafter maintained prolonged engagement with the data as suggested by Shank (2006) to ensure that the themes generated reflected the participants' experiences.

Transferability is likened with external validity and describes the degree to which the findings can be transferred to another population or setting (Shank, 2006). In this regard, the researcher formulated clear research questions, objectives and a research protocol that could guide other researchers in applying the findings in different contexts (Madurai, 2017). Furthermore, a thick and rich description of the data during the analysis and interpretation stages was included in the research report (Modiba, 2008).

Dependability in qualitative research is likened with the quantitative process of reliability and refers to the results of the study being repeatable (Madurai, 2017). Johnson and Waterfield (2004) maintain that although qualitative data cannot be replicated to prove reliability, it can be audited. Therefore, qualitative research should produce a well-documented process of data management and the decisions made during collection and analysis stages. Commonly, this is demonstrated by an audit trail (Johnson and Waterfield, 2004) and informs others how the researcher documented such key processes that eventually led to the end product (Madurai, 2017). The processes of peer examination and member checking were applied (Krefting, 1990, Roos and Strong, 2010). Through peer examination the researcher used the opportunity to discuss the process and findings with impartial academic colleagues at the university where the researcher is employed who have experience in qualitative methods. In terms of member checking, accuracy of the research interview was sought by re-stating or summarizing what was recorded at the end of each interview in order for the participant to verify the accuracy of the recorded data (Krefting, 1990).

Confirmability refers to the neutrality and objectivity of the data (Johnson and Waterfield, 2004) and calls on the researcher to be transparent with regards to how interpretations were arrived at in a systematic fashion, as opposed to the researchers characteristics or preferences. This is significant as it enables others to reach the same interpretations of the data (Madurai, 2017). The researcher has clearly documented the paradigm perspective, research design as well as the data analysis procedure followed in this research.

3.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

In this study a delimitation of the study design was that it was restricted to a specific population group, the senior management of the institution. As previously explained, these participants are

directly targeted by the institution's leader development strategy and hence, they were able to reflect valuable insights with respect to vertical leader development practices within the institution. A limitation of qualitative research is that the findings cannot be generalized to a wider population beyond from where the research was based (Yin, 2011).

The researcher strived to avoid bias by keeping the language with respect to the findings neutral concerning, race, age and gender, as these were not identifiable aspects of this research focus.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues present an ever-present concern in research, but perhaps more so for the qualitative researcher in particular (Iphofen and Tolich, 2018). Where the quantitative researcher often has the ability to pause and deliberate on numerical data and reconsider ethical questions, the emergent, dynamic and interactional nature of qualitative research does not offer the same retreat from ethical obligations (Iphofen and Tolich, 2018). Hence, ethical practice in business research is of utmost importance (Lehnert et al., 2016). The researcher has with the above concerns in mind, successfully satisfied the ethical clearance committee requirements both for the Graduate School of Business Leadership, University of KwaZulu Natal and the higher education institution where this research was carried out. This was done to register the research title, justify the research questions, population, sample and data collection procedures, as well as the ethical use of the data obtained. Refer to appendix 3 & 4 for the detailed discussion of ethical procedures.

3.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The research method decided upon is informed by the questions, aims and objectives of the study. Moreover, in scientific business research an additional focus is that of contributing solutions to various practical problems that arise in the organization. Therefore, with this in mind a qualitative research approach was adopted for this study. The research was grounded in the interpretivist perspective which emphasizes the subjective experiences of people and contextualises the meanings and perspectives people create concerning the topic. In terms of the study design, an interpretive description was chosen as it allows for an inductive approach that creates ways of understanding complex phenomena that yields applications as well as implications in organizational research. The research context and an appropriate organizational profile were briefly sketched to demonstrate the relevance of where the research was done and why with this specific organization and participants. The population of the study was senior management as defined within the organizational structure and through purposive sampling and clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, a sample was identified. Semi-structure

interviewing allowed for the generation of rich textual data that was analyzed by means of thematic analysis. The chapter was concluded by explaining the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness of the research process as well as how ethical aspects of the study were dealt with. In the next chapter the findings are presented and discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the methodological approach that was followed in conducting the study. The focus of this chapter will be on the presentation and discussion of key findings.

During the data analysis several themes were constructed that address these research objectives. Clarke and Braun (2013) advises that when presenting qualitative research findings, particularly when a thematic analysis was done, one should include compelling examples of verbatim extracts from the transcripts in order to capture the essence of what the participant stated. The extracts will be displayed in inverted quotation marks and in italic text. To protect the identity of the participants, their verbatim extracts will only be accompanied by a (P1) or (P2) descriptor etc, to display the variation amongst participants that informed the interpretation of the data. Where needed, some grammatical errors were corrected in the verbatim text in order for the reader who was not privy with regards to the audio recordings to be able to derive intended meanings of the participants. Otherwise, where deemed not needed the verbatim text was left unedited. The presentation of themes for discussion was done with a flowing narrative in mind so that the data can tell its own story concerning the experiences and views of participants. In line with the interpretivist paradigm and interpretive description research design, an inductive approach to data analysis and the presentation of the findings are done with the intent to convey the participants' voices to reflect their unique experiences and views.

4.2 DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.2.1 Themes for the primary objective: To investigate the practices of vertical leader development at a higher education institution in North West Province

4.2.1.1 Insufficient vertical leader development

The participants stated that vertical leader development practices were not consistently prioritised at the organization. The disappointment with which this view was articulated was apparent. Most participants' narratives suggested that they felt unsupported by the executive management of the organization in that crucial leadership skills were not invested in them, yet they were expected to lead the institution efficiently. Often when budget cuts were made vertical

leader development was almost seen as a luxury or an add-on and not an essential priority towards strategy execution:

“Right now at this time I feel it has failed us a bit I’m sorry to say....for the past 18 months especially...I feel as managers we have been totally neglected by the restructuring process...by so many issues...that at times I felt we are working extremely hard to keep everybody calm and to help them work through the restructuring, but there was very little support to all of us in management including the deans, campus rectors and I’d like to say at this point that I don’t think there was much leadership development at all in my opinion”(P4).

“I don’t think that it exists at the moment... I know that they have the new division now where they look at talent management and have a position of director for that.”(P3)

“...since 2004 there was nothing....you have to develop yourself, you have to learn from peers, you have to read your own books.”(P2)

Some of the participants also expressed their desire for leader development that emphasised more vertical development as opposed to horizontal development as this adds value when dealing with transformation:

“I would really like to have an advanced new managers course or just something more, because I am not in a place where I now want to enrol for my PhD, I’m pregnant...or an MBA for that matter.”(P1)

Petrie (2014) bemoans the lack of vertical leader development in organizations and emphasises what significant disadvantage this could have for them. Inability to deal effectively with complexity, embracing diversity and accepting responsibility to one’s actions are key considerations in leadership that are highlighted when vertical leader development is not implemented (Frizzell et al., 2016). In the higher education context this needs to be considered carefully, as Dopson et al. (2016) found in the United Kingdom that leaders in this sector are finding it more difficult to align institutional performance with desired strategies. In South Africa a similar concern exist, particularly as higher education is a sector in transformation (Davids, 2016). Hence, insufficient vertical leader development could be viewed as a risk for institutions who continue to negate its importance.

4.2.2 Themes for secondary objective 1: To describe the role and importance of vertical leader development practices in a higher education institution

4.2.2.1 The role & importance of making sense of transformation processes

4.2.2.1.1 Reconstructing the institution's identity

One participant explained that through the transformation process the institution ultimately had to reconstruct its core identity. There was a lot of inherent uncertainty as to what the institution would become due to competing views. This was also a deeply emotional experience characterized by a sense of loss of the known character of the institution that some staff identified with on a personal level. For instance, this participant explained how religion and language were fundamental aspects of the identity of the institution impacted by the transformation process:

“Then on the other hand, functioning as an entity I think we have made a lot of progress coming from a single-town institution and having a satellite campus on the Vaal to having a multi-campus institution to now having a unitary university... I think its good progression.” (P2)

“...there was unfortunately some value which was left behind in the process to be more populist. I am quite open to the concept of being a public university, therefore being more acceptable amongst the larger population, but I think we've lost a lot of value along the road... I see the loss we had surrounding the Christian character of the university...as far as I am concerned (that is) a tremendous loss to the university, I think we would have been one of the only surviving institutions from a Christian standpoint. But one also has to realise that if it hadn't changed automatically that would excluded many people. So for the sake of the bigger picture you have to move away from that issue.” (P2)

Organizational transformation is about deep change at the level of strategic intent which impacts values, culture, structure and routines (Canterino et al., 2018). This finding suggests that a critical factor in creating a new institutional identity pertains to ‘what that identity will be and directed by whom’. In this regard different schools of thought offer explanations and solutions (Canterino et al., 2018). The complexity theory perspective is that no agent can stand outside the system, comprehend it in its full complexity and design its future state by any means (Bodhanya, 2009, Gerwel Proches and Bodhanya, 2014). This ultimately means that transformations of identity are emergent and that the future identity of the institution is shaped by self-organizing processes that are distributed throughout the system (Bodhanya, 2016).

This finding suggests that there was an expectation that deep seated change needs to happen gradually within a stable landscape. There was also a sense of hesitancy about forming a core identity that was unknown and that was imposed by a central authority within the sector. What this reveals is that taking a complexity stance in vertical leader development would challenge the notion that stable identities over time is a given. Furthermore, the complex bottom-up interactions of the many different role-players give the organization its core identity as it moves through time. Imposed identities by central authorities frustrate this process of transformation at best, and at worst prevent it from occurring at all.

4.2.2.1.2 Understanding the consequences of a system in prolonged chaos

Some of the participants reflected on how the prolonged chaotic state of the higher education system has in some ways changed the nature of the sector, perhaps even permanently. Encapsulated in this view is not only the character of higher education that has been affected in the form of delivering relevant and quality graduates, but it seemingly has also affected the attractiveness of the sector as an employer. It emerged that some academics, particularly those trained in applied professions no longer viewed the sector as worthwhile for employment and have migrated to other industries where they felt they had better career prospects, less overall stress and stable income security. Some participants stated in this regard:

“It’s just creating too much of problems , the most problem that’s bringing this discontent, discomfort and a bit of stress to management and well as to staff and that reduces morale and eventually that also might impact on the output. So these are the consequences...”
(P11)

“And we have lost quite a few good people because of that, because everyone started thinking about alternatives, whereas if it wasn’t for things going on in the sector people wouldn’t have thought along those lines and would have been happy where they are. And I still honestly don’t know what lies ahead for us...we will have to see” (P5)

The South African transformation context is indeed complex and loaded, as remarked by Perold and Costandius (2015). And it is often the ‘emotionally loadedness’ that came to the fore in this sub-theme. While there is a clear appreciation for complexity or chaos, it is living with it over time that proved to be a difficult issue for participants. There also appeared to be an expectation for a return to homeostasis, with stability, order and predictability to prevail once more. Indeed, the prevailing context in general and the complexity theory perspective in particular challenges these assumptions (Elkington and Booysen, 2015). Managing complexity requires an appreciation for the edge of chaos property of CAS as described by (Stacey, 2012). When

viewed on a continuum, the edge of chaos exists between stability and instability, and in complex systems it is in this zone where creative novelty emerges (Stacey, 2012). For the participants the edge of chaos presented too much discomfort and therefore it was not a welcome state where anything good was expected to result. This was also clear in how many of their subordinates behaved by expecting these managers to stabilize their work environments and offer certainty. There was an assumption that very little good, if any can be achieved through transformation process. Hence, a negative organizational climate prevailed and many even left the system through resignation. It therefore stands to reason that a complexity perspective may have given participants an alternative lens through which they could have leveraged their sub-systems, and ultimately through such bottom-up interactions helped to propel the organization forward (Price, 2014).

4.2.2.1.3 Political agendas and power dynamics

Most of the participants referred to the complex political landscape within the higher education sector as a crucial component of their sense-making processes during this time of intended reform. For these participants, dealing with political formations is nothing new in the South African context. However, it is the shape of such formations by tertiary students and the aggressive nature with which they attempted to re-define the power dynamic that struck participants most. Some participants adopted the stance of ‘students as clients in the sector’, and it was as if such political formations presented them with the complex issue of dealing with the political demands of customers for whom they have no choice, but to serve. For the participants, this embodied a position of powerlessness and not having a stable base from which to engage, because unexpected political interference may derail intended long-term solutions to challenges. The comments below illustrate this:

“The issue is dealing with student formations politically on campus. How do we engage, firstly with their demands with regards to free higher education, access to the institution by their constitutions and the other issue is students who can’t afford studies, what do we do?” (P10)

“...students will protest outside the gate, that is something that I cannot control the fact that they are unhappy and they toi-toi and they burn tyres and they eventually even try to burn a building.” (P6)

“So because of the politics, I think that is the main, main problem as we cannot divorce ourselves from politics, but the politics is now interfering with education system and the proper running of such institutions. I feel that as a result of that I cannot list the problems

we are facing as 'the fees must fall' is affecting everything: Be it resources, finances because now we hear that students are registering without paying a cent, the universities need money to run so I can say that it is the main cause. There are so many problems that are rooting from such political decisions." (P11)

This is an expected finding given that Kulati and Moja (2006) has extensively outlined the political landscape of transformation in the South African higher education context more than a decade ago. They put forward that while the purpose of the legislative framework for governance is to provide structures that enable the facilitation of change, no single entity be it leadership, academics or students can be expected take sole responsibility for the transformation agenda (Kulati and Moja, 2006). Moreover, although control of these institutions has become more distributed over time, the on-going struggle for gaining legitimacy amongst role-players had persisted. As a result, establishing an overarching and coherent leadership framework has proven to be an on-going challenge in the sector (Kulati and Moja, 2006). This view dating back many years ago has undertones that are amenable to the complexity theory perspective.

The issue of control is a central dynamic of the complexity theory perspective, more so in the sense that hierarchical control is limited in the current leadership context (Bodhanya, 2016). This has profound implications for political agendas and how the power dynamic is understood (Gorzeń-Mitka and Okręglička, 2015). The finding portrays a forlorn and fatalistic sense of governing and leading experience from the stance of the participants. With some participants the emotion in this sense was noticeable. Baltacı and Balcı (2017) argues that the control mechanisms of the traditional leadership models of the Industrial Age hold little if any relevance in today's complex and chaotic environments. Therefore, the way leaders in the higher education sector use a complexity mind-set to make sense of transformation is critical (Becker, 2017).

For the researcher, this finding highlights that in vertical leader development more consideration needs to be given to CAS properties of self-organization and emergence when looking towards the future. It can be relatively easy to feel overpowered by politics especially in a country that is set to face its most contested election ever in few months' time. The value that taking a complexity theory stance holds is that it recognises the power of the masses at a local level (Olson and Eoyang, 2001). For the participants as senior managers in a large organization, adopting such a stance may reposition their mind-sets towards hope instead of despair.

4.2.2.1.4 Communication processes

The participants related that during the transformation process ineffective communication presented challenges within the organization. Several participants lamented that poor

communication hindered the change process in the sense that there was a ‘disconnect’ between different levels of management and frontline staff. As a result, people often got lost in the change process and this affected staff morale. They reported that staff also just stopped performing functions if they were uncertain as to what the operational procedures are with respect to those functions:

“I’m going to speak now from a senior management position. I think there is quite open communication between senior management, but there is a gap between senior management and staff. And if the gap really needs to be there I’m not sure, because there are frequent newsletters coming out, but I don’t think people read that...what people want is personal communication from their managers and that doesn’t happen and our structure at the moment....because all the managers are not in place...don’t allow for the few who are there to get to everybody.” (P2)

“...the communication between campuses is not there yet, so it makes it difficult for subordinates to know exactly to who am I reporting to, or what must I do...who’s division is taking priority, what is my priority and so on.” (P1)

It has been well established that for organizational transformation efforts to succeed an important process is effective communication (Curci, 2017). Cameron and Green (2017) also add that communication is fundamental in establishing a culture of trust during change. If there is a lack of or inefficient organizational communication it often results in increased employee turnover, low morale and reduced buy-in, especially during the initial phases of the transformation (Canterino et al., 2018). Petrou et al. (2018) maintain that communication in the context of the organization is socially constructed and filtered through sense-making processes. This view is supported by the complexity theory perspective, which states that complex systems are open and there is a constant exchange of information between agents in a dynamic and non-linear manner (Bodhanya, 2009). In a case study that focused on a change management intervention with leaders at the Church of England, Simpson and Flory (2012) noted the role of having complex conversations as a fundamental communication process in transforming the organization. They argued that because in complex systems emergent social processes are key, less attention is placed on individuals, but rather on the themes that emerge from the conversations amongst them (Simpson and Flory, 2012). In this way, continuous self-organizing patterns regarding their experiences, power relations, culture and trust are shaped. Thus through the forming and re-forming of these patterns transformation processes are enacted (Simpson and Flory, 2012).

This finding suggests that participants viewed and experienced communication concerning transformation in a linear top-down manner. As a result they had similar expectations about how to communicate and this often left them feeling that it was inadequate. By adopting a complexity stance, the organization could enact transformation much more effectively through taking advantage of emergence and self-organizing patterns formed by conversations within the system as a whole (Simpson and Flory, 2012). This does not mean that no directives and permission are given by administrators, merely that the power relations and trust in that context is re-defined (Bodhanya, 2016). Moreover, vertical leader development needs to address the issue of communication as a complex process in which meaning making is a central element.

4.2.2.1.5 Organizational culture

The participants related that an organizational culture that promotes diversity is profoundly entrenched within the organization's transformation process. Participants' narratives reflected that strategic organizational objectives such as changing policies on language, communication, talent management, reaching a new consumer base and achieving innovation were largely contingent on how successful organizational culture can be transformed, particularly with respect to embracing diversity:

“The challenges we are experiencing is our language policy, we need to align the culture, diversity...people are finding it very difficult to appreciate and embrace differences in other people, probably it comes from the socialisation process when people were raised...they don't have...it's not their fault, that's just how the social and political climate was and as an institution we have the responsibility to make sure that our environment is enabling and we can only do that by defining our culture and holding people accountable for how they behave...and you can only do that once you have defined your culture...”(P12)

“It is tough....when I think about the staff compliment...it is quite a challenge to balance older experienced academics...who's got a fairly rigid and fixed way of doing things....with newcomers with much more energy, new ideas and to try to balance these two ends of my staff compliment, because you cannot neglect the expertise of older experienced people, but you can on the other hand not ignore the energy and innovative ideas of a younger group.”(P4)

Organizational culture refers to an organization's philosophy, experiences, expectations as well as the values that guide behaviour of employees which is expressed in their self-image, beliefs, artifacts, interactions with those outside the organization, and its future expectations (Hogan and

Coote, 2014). Reporting on evidence-based guidelines for large-scale change processes, Heckelman (2017) outlines the importance of transforming organizational culture as part of successful change. According to the literature, organizational changes must be embedded into the culture of how people behave. Moreover, behaviour that is consistent with required changes must be rewarded and consequences assigned to behaviours not aligned to the transformation agenda (Heckelman, 2017). In the transformation of organizational culture, the complexity theory perspective argues that complex systems have a history which cannot be ignored (Coetzee, 2016). Given that the organization's culture is embedded within larger systems with a complex history rooted in former apartheid structures, transforming culture is especially relevant (Davids, 2016, Heleta, 2016). Boal and Schultz (2007) highlight the use of 'storytelling' about the organization's past history to create context and provide the impetus that drives its future. They argue that by drawing on the organization's past experience, knowledge and constructed meanings which constitute its core competencies, balance is created that facilitates needed tension for change, but also mitigates the paralysis of future uncertainty (Boal and Schultz, 2007). Hence, the past is linked to the future in a path-dependent process that builds on existing competencies (Boal and Schultz, 2007). One must be careful not to take merely a linear view of time which focuses on sequential events, but rather to adopt a cyclical view of past events which places the emphasis on repeated patterns over time (Boal and Schultz, 2007). By also focusing on a cyclical view of time, the non-linear relationships amongst various role-players are acknowledged, how small changes lead to significant outcomes understood, what the fitness landscapes were at different times contextualised and understanding how tensions were overcome in an adaptive manner (Boal and Schultz, 2007).

The implications of this finding is that organizational culture as experienced by the participants is a combination of historical events that essentially manifested in cyclical patterns over time. It appears that participants' sense making processes concerning culture were absorbed in the current issues such as language policy and employee diversity, for example. As one of the participants pointed out, the culture of the organization needs to be defined. Hence, taking a complexity view may unearth the adaptive capacity of the organization with respect to transformations and facilitate needed progression towards the edge of chaos that will provide an impetus for the culture of the organization to be co-constructed. In the L&D space, this can only be achieved through well-constructed vertical leader development practices.

4.2.2.1.6 Understanding multiple worldviews

Participants explained that within a transformation context understanding the different mind-sets of colleagues is very important as it gives context to the actions they take at times. This

contextualises the conflict and anxieties experienced when directives were enacted without subordinates knowing why or being able to see the full complexity of what was happening.

“..but I also understand where they come from to be able to manage everything on all the campuses effectively.”(P1)

“Sometimes the lack of buy-in at a managerial level, when we discuss these things we think this is the way to solve the problem. Like they don’t think it is or they would like to be taken along and be convinced in a way. So sometimes it’s a lack of buy-in...”(P10)

Kamsteeg (2016) states that organizations are essentially socially constructed spaces where sense making actors interact dynamically to shape organizational realities. This is by no means a straightforward and easy process, but one which has to be constantly negotiated. Moreover, the complexity of the transformation process is constantly reflected in this process (Kamsteeg, 2016). Just as with organizational ‘storytelling’ (Boal and Schultz, 2007), individuals stories often contain hidden and deeper meanings that reflects self-identities of organizational members (Kamsteeg, 2016). Therefore, individually held worldviews which finds its expression through narratives is a crucial process that creates reflexive organizational narratives in the transformation process (Kamsteeg, 2016).

This finding addresses a pertinent challenge in organizational transformation that speaks to the issue of participants’ individual mental models. In a complex system, agents are heterogeneous and have cognitive structures referred to as schemata that influence its behaviour (Bodhanya, 2009). As the agents interact with each other, through exchange of narratives their schemata change (Paley and Eva, 2011). Therefore, during organizational transformation creating change of individuals’ mental models by means of sharing stories is an important part of the vertical leader development process.

4.2.2.1.7 Surviving tensions

The participants explained that there is a perpetual emotional climate of tension in existence within the institution. Once emotions are activated they do not simply subside or become irrelevant. Instead tension is created within the organizational climate that superimposes operational activities and communication. There is also a strong stance in terms of ‘us and they’ that comes into effect and therefore the potential for conflict is created:

“...ok we have this challenge in front of us, we have this problem and let them feel that you are stepping on toes or that you dictate to them what to do, especially when it comes to other campuses...they are so quick to say we are ‘potchifying’ something and that we

just try to tell them what to do...So at the moment communication is difficult, because you don't feel at ease to send an email directly to someone from another campus, before going through your dean or your director or whatever because it quickly comes back as you were out of place.”(P1)

“Again I say that's very dangerous because followers are not stupid. Sooner or later they are going to say it is impossible for these guys to agree on everything...what the hell is going on?”(P2)

Another participant reflected on moments where senior managers could not cope with the tension and that resulted in maladaptive behaviour:

“You can't vent as a director in a meeting. You are emotional and you are venting. People do that, you are shouting at others in your speech...we had an incident like that.”(P12)

One participant reflected on being overwhelmed and doubtful with regards managing tensions effectively. This response poignantly demonstrates how easily complex transformation may trigger a subjective experience of stress which further has the potential to evoke personally held emotions and meanings:

“No I'm not the best guys for these complex issues and it may be that there is no better to manage it that they did manage it...they may have had the best humanly perceivable way of doing it... I have no better way, but I know the vacuums that were created in the way it was done. I'm somewhere between junior and middle management level and all the planning happens on senior and top management level, but needs to be sorted by middle management...so I can tell you this much that I'm on the receiving end of a lot of this shit.”(P2)

“I think there was a lot of discomfort between people that lead to the change (P3)

Social complex systems like organizations are mostly fraught with tension that is a natural element of adaption and survival, homeostasis on the other hand is a precursor for system death (Waddock et al., 2015). Thus, from a complexity perspective adaptive tension is the space between simplicity and chaos, referred to as the edge of chaos and is created by the organizational transformation process that demands innovation and change (Simpson and Flory, 2012). Essential products of tension within a complex system is emergence and self-organization, which in turn facilitates adaptation to the environment i.e. transformation (Cavanagh and Lane, 2012). While complexity theories advocate that such disequilibrium is a

natural process in complex systems, less guidance is given with respect to managing such tension in the organization, partly also because by doing so would invoke linear empiricism (Cavanagh and Lane, 2012). Nonetheless as previously stated, a lot of emphasis in this regard is placed on creating space for complex conversations, creativity and openness to diversity (Cavanagh and Lane, 2012, Simpson and Flory, 2012). Leaders play an important role in shifting the system towards the edge of chaos and helping to identify the boundaries of adaptive tensions serving as ‘tags’, and promoting synergy between different agents in the system, and ultimately enabling more agents within the system to exhibit the same function (Boal and Schultz, 2007). This process allows the organization to learn and adapt, and this is ultimately an indication of operating successfully at the edge of chaos (Boal and Schultz, 2007).

For the participants, describing their experience as surviving tensions as opposed to effectively managing them was apt. Several participants gave the impression that they personally absorbed a lot of the tension and discomfort of the change process. In this way it seemed that they wanted to protect their subordinates even though this came at a personal cost sometimes. Collectively, their respective teams and divisions showed signs of wanting the stability and homeostasis that simplistic systems offer to return, and at other times they reflected being in a completely chaotic and uncontained system. Hence, the leadership knowledge and skill that would serve as a ‘tag’ as Boal and Schultz (2007) put it was absent.

4.2.2.2 The role and importance of leading complex transformation

4.2.2.2.1 Adopting a complexity stance

The participants reflected positively on their abilities to make sense of complexity as part of their innate abilities and through what they have acquired through knowledge and experience. This theme was especially a common finding amongst the participants leading the academic structure of the organization. For them, complexity was synonymous with academia and the complex world of theories with which they naturally have a certain level of comfort with. Hence, they argued that the ability to understand the wider systemic objective of the transformation process is critical. The statement below by one of the participants reflected this point:

“I think for a person dealing with complexities has got two things when dealing with it. That’s my thing and my observation. It helps you deal with your innate abilities from the other end. For me, from what I’ve learnt through the levels of work theory, capability is your innate ability to deal with complexity in the absence of anything else. It’s like a common sense type of thing. How would you deal when you find yourself? Some of those elements of capability, a little portion of it is learnt through experiences...I guess its 20% learning because I believe 80% you

cannot teach someone to deal with complexity, I mean 80% is innate; it has to do with those innate abilities and that is why my personal belief is leaders of the world, you cannot teach a person leadership. People can learn to be leaders, yes they can be taught but they can only progress to a certain level of leadership.”(P12)

There were also noticeable idiosyncrasies with respect to how participant’s viewed there natural ways of engaging complexity:

“... I think my nature is to be very calm and collected. So normally if something is complex I like to first listen and try to get more facts and then try to sort things out... I like to make plans, so for me a problem is like a challenge, I like solving challenges.”(P5)

Another participant explained that seeing the bigger picture and the hope of what organizational transformation can achieve and believing in that is a key driver in leading the change process:

“Remember, we are restructuring. So I can see where we are going, we are trying to be inclusive; we are trying to ensure that we are not partial, like trying to give support to more of one race than the other as they claim it used to be the case. We are also trying to distribute resources fairly. So basically what I’m trying to say is that it is a transformation agenda which is really worth it.”(P11)

Concerning the complexity of work, Elliot Jacques was among the first organizational theorists to suggest that natural hierarchies exist whenever human beings organize themselves (Gray et al., 2007). Jacques argued that understanding levels of work complexity and as well as that of the context in which organizations operate was critical to its success (Grobler, 2005). Based on Jacques’ reasoning leaders positioned at higher levels of the organizational structure need to function at a higher level of complexity, thus being able to observe the more complex processes involved in the transformation process (Mumford et al., 2007). From Complexity Theory perspective this implies that leaders must be able to respond effectively to the constantly changing work environments in which they are based on making good decisions (Baumann, 2015). This does not merely involve top-down delegation, but rather calls for leaders to be more adaptive when they interact in systemic networks that constantly allow for the development of new ways to function (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Hence, adopting a complexity leadership stance means that leaders keenly disrupt existing patterns of behaviour in the organization to facilitate change and promote novelty by encouraging non-linear interactions, innovative ideas, and to interpret changing conditions for their subordinates (Elkington and Booysen, 2015).

This finding suggests that participants are inclined to conceptually adopt a complexity stance concerning the level of work expected of an executive leader. However, their stance was not

clearly reflective of complexity theory principles as it operates within a complex adaptive system and could therefore be a specifically targeted in a vertical leader development initiative.

4.2.2.2.2 Responsible leadership

Exercising responsible leadership should be an inherent aspect in leading complex transformation, according to the participants. During transformation the potential to cause harm is very likely and therefore leaders have to demonstrate honesty, integrity and responsibility. Leaders have to ensure that their functional performance is in line with transformation requirements:

“...if you give me the authority to do my work, then I must act like a leader to take the people below me with and not botch the process, because the responsibility is on my shoulders, now I must perform.”(P3)

“It is more important for me to do what is right, that I know and learnt for myself.”(P5)

Furthermore, one participant explained that transformation processes must be met with integrity and with the wellbeing of the organization in mind, not merely as a tactic to execute personally held objectives. To highlight this view, this participant related how an entire restructuring process was started that required employees to re-apply for their positions in order to get rid of one person who seemingly overstayed their welcome in the organization:

“...tell them look we can disrupt the entire organisation to effect this or we can let you go in a peaceful way...instead the whole organisation was placed in a negative mode even though the law was followed to the letter, I think it cause more harm than good, because it disrupted people’s feeling of security.”(P3)

Responsible leadership is not a theory of leadership in the strictest sense, rather this field of leadership studies places emphasis on making sustainable business decisions that reflect the various levels of interests of all stakeholders (Blakeley, 2016). These stakeholders may comprise of government, non-profit organizations, customers, employees, various role-players throughout the value chain and society at large that are affected by the activities of the organization (Blakeley, 2016). Responsibility in this sense therefore, is closely associated with fairness, accountability and dependability, and has strong ties to corporate social responsibility, social justice, human rights, integrity and the redistribution of power (Cameron, 2011, Blakeley, 2016). Therefore, responsible leadership holds the view that people, profit and concern for the environment are not mutually exclusive constructs (Antunes and Franco, 2016). In response to global crises, ethical scandals and economic recessions, an emerging stream including ethics,

leadership and corporate social responsibility have given rise to a triangulated version of responsible leadership theory (Doh and Quigley, 2014). Responsible leaders therefore, have personal accountability that goes beyond those who derive direct monetary benefit from the organization (Doh and Quigley, 2014). Antunes and Franco (2016) contends that this also challenges the meanings of the leadership function in the sense that leaders can no longer be seen as individuals standing out on the top of the pyramid as the sole creators of situations. Rather, the leader needs to be at the centre of a web of complex relationships, metaphorically speaking (Antunes and Franco, 2016). This draws parallels with the complexity theory perspective. Complexity Leadership Theory places core emphasis on building social capital through being interconnected and fostering a sense of cohesion (Arena and Uhl-Bien, 2016), very much akin to the responsible leadership view. The value of which is brokerage of higher levels of trust as a vital ingredient for adaptability to emerge (Arena and Uhl-Bien, 2016). Duit and Galaz (2008) further add that many complex problems such as famine, poverty and climate change are created as a result of failure to act collectively and the strengthening of individualistic mechanisms of power and its resultant capacity for exploitation.

This finding based on participants' experience indicate how lack of responsible leadership at times impeded the transformation process and was detrimental to organizational trust and well-being. Being an institution of higher education cannot compromise its stance on responsible leadership, both for its own stakeholders and as a tool for transformation in the country at large. The Complexity Theory perspective contributes to this notion through its core focus on building social capital (Arena and Uhl-Bien, 2016) and providing the vertical leader development process with a framework for sense-making of complexities (Matei and Antonie, 2015).

4.2.2.2.3 Emphasizing collaboration

Taking a collaborative stance emerged as a finding that emphasized that even though a management position is specific to administrative duties, leadership involves everyone in the organization. Some of the participant's argued that having a shared concern for the transformation process enables the organization to get the most out of change. Important functions such as setting strategic direction and decision-making are better negotiated through collaboration:

“Somebody has to manage, but at the end of the day we are all focussing on the objectives of the institution. This then brings about some sort of understanding for my subordinates and it becomes a smooth ride.”(P10)

“...listen more to what the people on the ground have to say, and also to...You see we are in our infancy of this new structure. One thing which I have seen and which I think I would recommend is that at whatever levels of the implementation, even the people at the grass roots must be told”(P11)

Curci (2017) maintains that to let go of control and shift to a more collaborative mind-set can be challenging even under the best circumstances. Embracing a collaborative approach requires a high degree of psychological safety and interpersonal trust (Curci, 2017). It is therefore unsurprising that most models used in large-scale change emphasise communication and cascading of change strategy from top to bottom, but do not pertinently emphasise taking a collaborative approach to decision-making (Heckelman, 2017). Thus, calibration of sub-systems is valued more than true collaboration between sub-systems (Heckelman, 2017). Be that as it may, Pearce et al. (2014) state that dozens of research studies have found that when leadership is collaborative it is linked with various positive organizational outcomes. In their view, shared or collaborative leadership involves all the social actors in the organization being involved in the process of leading each other (Pearce et al., 2014). Bodhanya (2016) adds that with organizational transformation the goal is to change the organizational configuration through means of altering its sub-systems and the relationships between them. From a complexity perspective that means changing the dynamic from rigid bureaucratic top-down management style to embracing the self-organizing potential of complex adaptive systems (Zuiker et al., 2016).

The participants in this research recognized the value of having an inclusive and collaborative stance concerning the future of the organization. Being middle managers it was clear to them that employees at lower levels of the organizational structure had much value to add to executive decision-making. Hence, for the participants developing a collaborative leadership stance in dealing with transformation was a crucial sense-making approach and eases the burden of pressure and because the future vision was shared, less effort needed to be placed on creating buy-in from staff. The data also reflected that participants were generally comfortable to share the leadership platform with their staff as opposed to leading by edict and decree.

4.2.2.2.4 Managing deep uncertainties

A common thread that emerged from the data was that some risks are unknown to or beyond the control of leaders. Nonetheless being able to manage unknown uncertainties as they occur is an important part of leading complex transformation. Ultimately, leaders need to understand the

nature of uncertainties and manage it to ensure that the best possible outcomes concerning transformation are achieved. To capture this, one participant noted that:

“Some of the risks are out of your control, I mean risk that students will protest outside the gate, that is something that I cannot control the fact that they are unhappy and they toi-toi and they burn tyres and they eventually even try to burn a building. But I can try my utmost best to prevent that, so I can identify it as a risk, I can try to maybe manage it to the best of my ability and at the end prevent them from burning the buildings so risk and risk management is something I think you can do something about” (P6)

Teece et al. (2016) distinguishes between risk and deep uncertainty when operating in turbulent environments. Risks relate to known problems or outcomes and can be managed with traditional tools and methods (Teece et al., 2016). With deep uncertainties the nature and extent of problems are unknown, it has no proven effective solution, its life-span is pervasive and its complexity is dependent on a set of interconnections (Teece et al., 2016). One particular challenge with deep uncertainty in the context of a complex organization is that through transformation the system itself emerges (Bodhanya, 2016). This means that there is no long-term strategic direction and that if the turbulence of change is adequately managed a new previously unknown state will emerge (Bodhanya, 2016). This has implications in leading complex transformation concerning issues of risk and uncertainty. Leaders who adopt a complexity mind-set will perceive unknown possibilities differently, whether it be risk or deep uncertainty (Helfat and Peteraf, 2015). Olmedo (2012) maintains that leading in complex environments require that leaders have complex seeing abilities that develops through sense-making of non-linear dynamics. In relation to risk or deep uncertainties, this means harnessing the ability to perceive self-organization and emergence when complexities arise (Olmedo, 2012).

This finding suggests that participants struggled with the concept of risk as it pertains to deep uncertainties. Management of known risks by means of traditional known tools and methods created a sense of control over the situation, or at least the perception thereof. In the context of protesting students, being able to identify and manage risks created an impression of not being helpless in the face of this complex transformation problem. While this may lead to temporary control, it offers little with regards to achieve transformation. Instead, risk management in this way may form part of a repetitive cycle that requires constant maintenance. Developing complex vertical capacities with respect to deep uncertainties requires that the participants develop sense-making by embracing complexity theory principles that govern complex adaptive systems.

4.2.3 Themes for secondary objective 2: To identify and discuss the challenges associated with vertical leader development practices as experienced by the leaders at a higher education institution.

4.2.3.1 Personal development as a challenge in vertical leader development practices

4.2.3.1.1 Emotional intelligence

Most of the participants related that developing emotional intelligence is an important facet in their development as leaders. In this regard, there was a recognition that leadership ultimately rests on the interaction with people, especially in the work context. Hence, participants' views suggest that leaders need to cultivate self-awareness and being able to understand the emotional context in situations and behaving appropriately. Emotional intelligence in this context also meant that leaders develop attributes required in their specific roles and as such changes their adaptive capacities on a personal level as well. One participant explained that as part of a previous leadership development programme she gained valuable insight with respect to understanding her own emotions and that of her subordinates:

“...but for me what stood out was the things like emotional intelligence, like that module meant so much for me in my work, just to know how to...I don't know if behave is the correct word....how to present yourself when it comes to working with subordinates especially.”(P1)

Other participants highlighted that to progress into leadership one cannot merely rely on IQ, but that emotional intelligence is vital for becoming aware of personal blind spots and understanding context when dealing with people. Having higher levels of emotional intelligence minimizes the potential for destructive conflict:

“...you need to have a lot of hopefully emotional intelligence...you have to remind yourself everyday why you are here, what your purpose in life is and why you are doing it.”(P2)

“There is a book that says that “what got you here will not necessary take you to the next level.” That means your IQ can only take you to a certain point as you progress through the leadership and what matters after that is your EQ.”(P12)

Emotional intelligence or EQ has been defined as a broad construct that addresses emotional, personal, social and survival dimensions of intellectual functioning (duToit et al., 2017). In a South African study of 1800 senior leaders at a financial services institution that sought to understand whether there is a relationship between EQ and future leadership development effectiveness, duToit et al. (2017) found statistically significant correlations between emotional

intelligence and leadership variables. More pertinently the study found that leaders at a South African financial services institution who demonstrated high levels of EQ were also regarded as effective leaders (duToit et al., 2017). A similar finding was found by vanMelleKamp et al. (2017) who interviewed 27 chief executive officers from 11 companies in South Africa. In that study, participants related that having higher levels of emotional intelligence was critically important in dealing with people in a complex business environment (vanMelleKamp et al., 2017). Despite the research being divided concerning genetic versus learned aspects of emotional intelligence, there has been empirical evidence that suggests that individuals can learn to improve their levels of emotional intelligence over time (Flores et al., 2018). This has implications for vertical leader development as leaders can improve their emotional capacities over time (Petrie, 2014). Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) emphasizes that leaders must become comfortable with living with uncertainty through constantly making sense of adaptive tension and enabling people to align their thinking and collaboration under such circumstances (Uhl-Bien and Marion, 2009, Burchell, 2012). Thus, by developing emotional intelligence leaders are better equipped in dealing with complexities (vanMelleKamp et al., 2017). Emotional intelligence as a vertical leader capacity resonates with complex feeling and seeing as described by Olmedo (2012), which enhances the leader's ability to harness positive emotions in the system and becoming aware of their own unconscious perceptions that may constrain the system through limiting sense-making.

The researcher found that participants viewed developing emotional intelligence as a critical challenge in their maturation as leaders. This particularly stands out in their reflection on their own behaviour, becoming more self-aware of how they impact on others in the organization and to remain effective in their roles while navigating change positively.

4.2.3.1.2 Leader maturity

For the participants, leader maturity refers to having the needed experience and mind-set to engage complex challenges. This requires that leaders must be in tune with the prevailing emotion, but not be steered blindly by feelings. This goes beyond having emotional intelligence. According to the participants, mature leaders do not avoid the complex problems, but rather engross themselves in it. When the situation becomes uncontained, the mature leader composes herself and helps others maintain focus on the having progressive conversations and not the destructive emotions that it can elicit:

“I think if I could give this milestone a name it would ‘to talk about the elephant in the room’. There have been several other issues which has historically been swept under the

carpet by the school that I took and I think I had good fruit, because there was a tendency to avoid conflict....there was a tendency to avoid talking about difficult topics.”(P4)

“I think if you can start there, and from a performance management perspective as well it will also enhance the diversity discussions, courageous conversations for managers because managers are scared to have courageous conversations. Managers need to be able to say, ‘people, let us sit and talk,’ ‘what is it that I’m not doing?’ let us have a dialogue, let us talk about the most important things. Racism is not meant for us and we shy away from that. So those are the capabilities that I want to focus on in the next two years and try to develop leaders.”(P12)

After studying the research on failed organizational transformations, Bunker et al. (2012a) concluded that effective vertical leader development over the long-term places value on leadership learning from experience. Instead of constantly replacing leaders after the organization has failed, allowing leaders to learn from experience and mature in complex capabilities is far more valuable than constantly needing to bring in somebody new (Bunker et al., 2012a). Leaders mature when they gain experience from work-related challenges (Solansky, 2014). Solansky (2014), found in an empirical study of 250 leadership development participants that those with more leadership experience correlated with a deeper feeling of psychological empowerment which further leads to having positive engagements with followers. From a CLT perspective this is important for leaders who serve as ‘tags’, who through being interactively attuned with other agents in the system moves it towards the edge of chaos (Schneider and Somers, 2006). Matured agents in this sense (VanVelsor, 2008) serve as mediators who facilitate the probability of emergence, developing networks and fostering cultivating interdependencies. Leader maturity resonates with complex knowing based on the premise of being able to cultivate a common language that enhances communication within the system during periods of uncertainty (Olmedo, 2012).

In this research having complex conversation in a space that was adaptive was lacking. Often the participants’ narratives reflected being trapped by fear of not being able to garner adaptive tension. This may well have been due to leader maturity as a vertical development capacity that was not present. The participants who reflected positively in this regard relied on their experience and maturity to address complexities in an adaptive manner.

4.2.3.1.3 Cognitive complexity

Cognitive complexity emerged as being able to recognise personally thinking patterns and philosophies inform a person’s sense of reality. Be that as it may, subjective realities are also

only a perspective, one that may not necessarily be shared by others. Therefore, cognitive complexity allows the leader to recognise the many different elements in a given situation and based on that gains access to a wider recourse beyond personal and known inclinations. In this regard, a participant related how the student protests challenged his perspective given the side of the dialogue he had found himself. It seems clear that this situation allowed his cognitive complexity to gain more depth and as a result he was able to develop empathy with someone whom he had fundamental differences in opinion with:

“To be able to look beyond that person that you’ve just helped two weeks ago from out of the gutter to now torch something. That to look beyond that and to say that it’s not me, it’s not you who did it. So after torching whatever you have torched, to prepare me to look beyond that action and be able to help you again. That’s the most difficult thing for me to do because if I really did my utmost best to help you, now you’ve torched something and three weeks later everything’s calmed down, now you come back to me and say please help me again. Now you need to forgive... eish! That disgust that you feel when you see that student, I mean the Mayor of Midvaal, for instance he said that there’s this guy that he took into his house and he is looking after this guy, he supports him, he does everything for him and we had big unrest on the R59 with the community out there and when he got onto this vehicle to talk to the people this guy that lives in his house, that he supports and took off the streets is standing there right in front, shouting to him you bloody bastard... That is the most difficult thing to do. To go back home tonight, to take that guy back into your home again and say there’s some food.”(P6)

Leaders have to adapt to contextual demands in rapidly changing conditions and in doing so may have to display diversity in activities, often adopting to multiple contradictory or antagonistic roles (Baron et al., 2018). Studies have found that cognitive skills play a critical role in the degree of flexibility displayed by leaders (Baron et al., 2018). Cognitive complexity can be described as the way in which a person perceives, processes and transforms information in different ways (Presbitero, 2015). Graf-Vlachy et al. (2017) adds that cognitive complexity reflects a person’s tendency to engage in multidimensional and nuanced thinking. With increased pressure, a leader’s cognitive complexity becomes markedly diminished and is prone to one-dimensional simplistic ‘black-and-white thinking (Graf-Vlachy et al., 2017). Linear thinking emanates from the top-down command and control perspective (Baltaci and Balci, 2017). Based on data from 248 employee-supervisor dyads in various organizations, Shao et al. (2017) found that employee creativity and self-efficacy was positively associated with higher cognitive complexity. In CLT, cognitive complexity resonates with complex thinking which

emphasizes circular causality as opposed to rigid linear thinking (Olmedo, 2012). Through cognitive complexity leaders can also identify barriers to information flow in the system and have access to greater recourse in addressing complexities (Clarke, 2013).

The participant in this regard was challenged with cognitive complexity by often being under pressure and wanting to revert to a linear thinking approach. When the student protests turned violent and property was destroyed on campus there was a clear divide between the organization's leadership and students. For this participant, recognizing that as a leader he has to think and process emotions in a complex manner he was able to look beyond the immediate future over which he had little or no control and what he was feeling in the present moment in order to help the same person who contributed to his pain. In this way, he was able to demonstrate cognitive complexity through being flexible in his own thinking and to do something for a greater purpose.

4.2.3.1.4 Leader as servant

Participants explained that leader as servant meant making others better or giving them access to resources and opportunities they couldn't obtain before. For them this entails leading with purpose and making a positive difference in society:

"To me when one has changed another's life it's a milestone and that's what I am here for, to change people and student's lives." (P8)

"So I'm doing it not for myself, I'm not doing it to fight the institution, I'm am doing it because I personally get satisfaction by doing things right every time, to go to bed every day and say to myself I have done my best to help people and the institution." (P2)

"I value the fact that I had the potential to become a leader first of all and I value the fact that I have an opportunity to empower others through the position that I have." (P4)

A servant leader focuses on the wellbeing of followers within the system, emphasizes social responsibilities and helps people grow (Andersen, 2018). Servant leaders show strong commitment towards the social enterprise by connecting people with resources and creating a strong future outlook through passion and a commitment to work (Ilac, 2018). While servant leader has theoretical principles, it has no prescriptions and therefore lends itself to be successfully incorporated with other models of leadership (Andersen, 2018). Thus, the principles of servant leadership also resonate with complex acting capacity within the complexity sphere as suggested by Olmedo (2012). Complex acting shows concern for ethical behaviour and what is in the best interest of the whole system (Olmedo, 2012). It also resonates strongly with building social capital though sharing of knowledge, shared meaning-making and cultivating trust

between members (Clarke, 2013). From a vertical leader development perspective, servant leadership emphasizes relationship building skills of the leader (Clarke, 2013).

In this research the participants' reflections on principles of servant leadership as a vertical leader development process was a common theme. Several of the participants viewed themselves as agents of change for students and society, and utilized their leadership roles as a means towards this end. Pertinent in their views was not enacting a personal agenda, but acting in the best interest of the system as a whole.

4.2.3.1.5 Leader identity

Leader identity encapsulated participants having a sense of how leadership impacted on how they see themselves both professionally, and personally. It reflected being a process of constant development. Throughout their development issues relating to changing organizational conditions allowed some of them to reflect on how they have changed to become the leaders they are:

“...I became an engineer then asked myself ok what now, who am I? ...what do I do with this?...not to think like that and be so short-sighted but to look at the bigger picture about where I am and what steps do I need to climb to get to where I want to be...in the beginning it was just about ok where am I now?...but now...you see I was also raised in a particular system without realising it, through this process of transformation I also had to reflect on who I am now” (P7)

“...to be able to say I don't like this change or I support this change because of who I am” (P1)

“I would like to think of myself as a very reflective leader” (P4)

Kragt and Guenter (2018) define leader identity as an individual's self-perception in the context of a particular social role. This further implies that leader identity is socially constructed (Kragt and Guenter, 2018) and a process of sense-making at the level of the individual in relation to others (Zheng and Muir, 2015). Future-fit leaders will need to have a coherent and robust sense of identity (Allio, 2016, Allio, 2018, Akers, 2018). More experienced leaders are likely to have more complex identities in terms of knowledge, skills and abilities (Kragt and Guenter, 2018). Hence, the construct of leader identity has implications for leader development (Zheng and Muir, 2015). Leader development professionals should help leaders examine who they are, how they evolved over time and how they manage others (Sims et al., 2017). From the complexity perspective, leader identities are about being and not being in control (Karp and Helgø, 2009). Thus, identity is fluid and a complex process embedded in the circular movement of time and

space in the mind of the leader (Karp and Helgø, 2009). To enable leadership to emerge in complex systems, leaders need to develop their ability to reflect on their identities in a social contexts (Karp, 2012). Concerning vertical capacities, leader identity resonates with complex being as suggested by Olmedo (2012). This refers to being open to life-long continuous learning and evolving and allowing for the leader's complexity in identity to emerge (Olmedo, 2012). It also draws comparison to what Clarke (2013) refers to as supporting autocatalysis. Leaders have to facilitate interactions between heterogeneous ensembles to help foster conditions for leadership processes to self-organize (Clarke, 2013). Leaders have to show compatibility with this requirement on in terms of their thinking and behaving which is essentially driven by their identities (Sims et al., 2017).

This finding indicates that participants in this study valued their identities as leaders. There was also a sense that they reflected about their leader identities in the social context of the organization and that the transformation context caused them to continue evolving in this regard. To make the most of their vertical capacities, this manner of reflecting is required to be life-long with emphasis on continuous self-discovery and being amenable to being a common thread through which others can relate and create adaptive synergies.

4.2.4 Themes for secondary objective 3: To provide recommendations on how to deal with challenges posed by vertical leader development practices in a higher education institution.

4.2.4.1 Crafting a L&D strategy that includes vertical leader development

4.2.4.1.1 Prioritizing VLD in the L&D Strategy

The participants recommended that the organization looks towards crafting a leader development strategy through which the vertical development of leaders can be achieved. Towards this end, a thorough needs analysis is essential and buy-in must be sought especially from those who will attend such programmes. Furthermore, such a strategy must focus on sustainability of vertical leader development and a key focus should be relevance to the organization. The champion of vertical leader development must have seniority and maturity as a leader to ensure that it remains an essential aspect of human capital development:

“The people at HR responsible should sit down with all line managers, senior managers and directors to get an assessment of what is needed, to get buy-in, not to decide in a one-sided manner this is what we want you to learn so learn it.”(P3)

“I just hope that they are up for it to develop the relevant things and that they incorporate management and also to say what is the needs exactly and not just to come with courses

that they find somewhere....especially because they appoint very young people in these positions. I'm just afraid that it's going to end up again that we need to say and then they are not listening, then they just get some outside people who don't have the correct ideas of what should be implemented... and then they make a tick these managers and say ok it's done, but the end result is not working for the institution....that's a fear I have.”(P3)

“We will have different programmes for the different levels of leadership.”(P12)

Another facet of the strategy is maintaining a standard against which leader development initiatives are managed. Such a standard will outline what type of leadership competencies the organization values and wants to grow. It informs descriptors on a behavioural level that has utility for human capital operations such as assessment for recruitment for instance:

“I would recommend that we firstly align what we want to achieve as an organisation, agree on the type of leader that we want for us to achieve. Define clearly the competencies that are in line with what we want to achieve. Once we have done that then we have got a standard that we can use to check where our current leaders are. Maybe from a recruitment point of view, we are sure and we know we are recruiting the breed that we want, but from a development point of view you can only identify what you want once you have standard.”(P12)

Furthermore, another aspect of strategic vertical leader development within the organization that emerged is the view that ultimately the value proposition of the leader should be increased. In doing so, the organization benefits through having more capable talent that drives the organization forward:

“...it really got my mind into personal development and how important it is, because I feel that previously when I started working at (the organisation) in 2012 I was not so into personal development I was only looking at academic development...I want to do my masters and I want to do this...and my mind-set was changed to acknowledge that my superiors will not only look for academic performance when it comes to promotion, they won't only look at what degrees I have but it is also going to be personal development.”(P1)

“I'm much more aware of how I may impact on other people and I can also see how others can potentially have an impact on me...my horizons have become much broader and my levels of empathy is more higher than it ever was before, because you have an impact on other people and you have to put yourself in another person's shoes to see how things affect him...I have to think about how does this effect that person, how can I make things

easier for him and what does he need to do his job more effectively or to perform the new tasks that he has never done before?...how do I get him from where he is to where he is supposed to be... I am a lot more aware of those things and I got that capability from leader development.”(P3)

It is clear that vertical leader development is needed to propel recruits into business leadership roles successfully (Katz, 2016). In a detailed research report conducted on leadership in higher education in the United Kingdom recently, Dopson et al. (2016) maintain that due to the new demands being placed on university leaders, leader development is an undeniable need in the sector. There is consensus that leaders in the higher education sector in South Africa are facing unprecedented levels of innovation and a difficult transformation agenda (Albertyn and Frick, 2016, Becker, 2017, DuPreez et al., 2017). Therefore, vertical leader development needs to become a strategic imperative that such organizations must prioritize (Maheshwari and Yadav, 2018). In a large study done recently in India that included 127 leader development participants from 17 organizations, 24% reported lack of a clear strategy surrounding leader development efforts (Maheshwari and Yadav, 2018). The lack of clarity was based on clear leadership competencies and alignment with implementing business strategy (Maheshwari and Yadav, 2018). It was also reported in the study that organizational culture, selection of appropriate candidates and supportive human resources processes were all factors that inhibited effectiveness of the process (Maheshwari and Yadav, 2018). Day et al. (2014a) maintains that effective leader development strategy aligns with business expectations, involves stakeholders, articulates a leadership model in context, supports participant aspirations, and integrates human resources processes. Notwithstanding the significance of vertical leader development, an associated problem of strategic importance concerns measuring effectiveness and return on investment (Katz, 2016).

The higher education sector is no exception and this often accounts for the poor prioritization of vertical leader development efforts (Dopson et al., 2016). It is also important that the evaluation of vertical leader development effectiveness evolve along with the relevant constructs in context, in this respect not all aspects prioritized in leader development will lend itself to conventional metrics (Dopson et al., 2016). There is a growing body of research evidence that complexity dynamics are informing strategies on leader development (Scherrer, 2018). Hence, more consideration is needed for qualitative evaluation of leader development (Fung and Montague, 2015). In the South African context all L&D strategies must align with the National Human Resources Standards (Katz, 2016). The leadership development standard for South African organizations as set out by the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP, 2016) states

the following fundamental requirements for good leadership development that may assist higher education institutions in providing fit-for-purpose leader development interventions:

- an organization must have a clear perspective of how effective leadership is understood and be able to develop an appropriate leadership competency model to express it.
- individual leader development must be optimised relative to the person involved.
- desired leader behaviour must be identified and role-modelled by senior executives. (SABPP, 2016, Katz, 2016, Meyer, 2016).

Concerning these guidelines the Complexity Leadership Model may add value in how the organization under analysis strengthens its leadership capacities, creative value and innovation and navigate large-scale transformation (Gorzeń-Mitka and Okręglicka, 2015, Poutanen et al., 2016). Furthermore, this finding suggests that vertical leader development must become a strategic imperative in the organization especially during this difficult period of transformation.

4.2.4.1.2 Learning from previous failures

Although the organization has not consistently provided leader development programs, there have been some initiatives over the years. Some of the participants highlighted several aspects of those initiatives that they were dissatisfied with. Reflecting on a leader development program that was subsequently terminated, participants explained that executive management sanctioned a program through which senior managers felt very betrayed. A few months before the organizational structure was communicated a leadership development consultancy was contracted to deliver an intervention. The format of the program included conducting personal surveys that apparently did not guarantee anonymity or confidentiality. Moreover, the content of the programme did not resonate with the participants as it seemed that no needs analysis was done. Subsequently, there was a breach of trust and participants of the programme became oppositional towards it. The following narratives refer to this situation:

“Well I don’t know if you encountered anything about a leadership course we were all required to attend two years ago?....I know many people perceived that course in a very negative way...”(P4)

“And then we’ve got the sessions from thinking fusion and there was a lot of joking about thinking confusion...and I think the results of that were taken to push through a new structure without the participants knowing that they are going to use it afterwards” (P2)

In-house development initiatives were also perceived with negativity. One participant explains that an existing talent management programme although valuable, is exclusionary towards some employee due to equity policy issues:

“We have the things like growing your own timber...taking our students and helping them evolve into a lecturer, because we know another lecturer is going to retire soon, so we get that student, develop them and have them work with that person who is going to retire in a few years and after a few years he can go into that post ...but we don't have that for the admin staff and I'm sorry to say it's only for designated groups so me as a white person won't be able to get into that program.”(P1)

Katz (2016) states that organizational loyalty to L&D business partners who are unsuitable in terms of addressing the needs of leaders and a rigid focus on organizational top management needs are some of the reasons why leader development programmes fail. It may also be why vertical leader development participants have negative perceptions towards such interventions (Katz, 2016). It seems clear from the narratives of participants that the leader development partner retained by the organization did not understand the vertical development needs of the participants. Instead, they proceeded with a pre-determined agenda and were unable to create training rapport with the participants. This finding also suggests that from an organizational perspective there was a need to address leader development symptomatically and not from a holistic systems perspective as discussed by (Cameron, 2017). Cameron (2017) contends that trust in organizations is often broken through three elements, including bad surprises, bad information and bad character. Based on the participants' experiences of this program, the organization was culpable on all three grounds. This finding further suggests that the inherent power dynamic that favoured top management was an obstacle for the program. In this regard Curci (2017) recommends creating a more collaborative approach in the organization builds trust and allows employees to take ownership of organizational change processes. Lastly, this finding addressed negative perceptions regarding developing future leaders. Future leaders are more likely to pursue work in organizations that reflect their own core beliefs and value systems (Akers, 2018). One of the participants reflected that she did not perceive fairness which an important facet of her core belief and value system in how the organization selected candidates for development opportunities. Hence, for the organization to implement successful leader development practices, doing a 'values check' is critical to ensure that aligned with the organization's collective values, especially also with regards to equal opportunity (Mayer et al., 2018).

4.2.4.1.3 The importance of ethics

Following sub-theme two, due to the experiences that participants had in this particular leadership development programme, issues of ethics came to the fore. For the participants an uncompromising stance towards ethical leader development was important, because it offers a safe space within which to grow that is free from persecution. One participant explained that management had sanctioned what could be likened to a ‘reconnaissance mission’ into middle managers’ attitude concerning the organization that was disguised as a vertical leader development project:

“They asked us questions and that’s where ethics come in...what was going on in that leadership course was unethical in my point of view, because they asked us sets and sets and sets of questions, multiple choice staff and things to rate and the lady was open about it that these were middle management’s responses and when she had all middle management’s responses she couldn’t wait to show it to top management...and she was open about that. And you know what the very next day when she posed questions to us I completely botched it up...because nobody told me that this is going to top management, nobody told me that this is research and not personal development... so honesty plays a role from A to Z.”(P3)

The King IV Report™ clearly states that corporate governance structures should lead ethically and in doing so cultivate characteristics of integrity, transparency, fairness, responsibility and accountability (IoDSA, 2016). The ethical principles stipulated in the King IV Report™ also apply to managing performance which governs leader development practices (IoDSA, 2016). Hardman (2016) maintains that large scale change on a global context creates emergent ethical challenges that are multi-faceted and far-reaching. Bearing relevance to leader development practices these challenges related to change of mind-sets, and may therefore create conflict associated with power, methodologies, knowledge paradigms and impact of learning (Hardman, 2016). From a complexity perspective, ethical leadership implies adopting relevant emergent leadership in context (Hardman, 2016).

This research finding highlights the importance in ethical conduct when engaging in leader development practices. As experienced by this participant transgressions of ethics may exist during the transformation process and the leader development context may present opportunities for such transgression to occur. Hence, ultimately the quest for better ethical conduct should coincide with development of leaders (VanRooyen, 2008).

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the responses of 15 participants were discussed. The data was structured to address the research objectives that were identified for the study. The study found that vertical leader development practices were neglected by the institution under analysis. Based on the participants' views several roles and important features of vertical leader development were discussed. These included making sense of and leading complex transformation that contextualises the institution's current needs. Personal development was discussed as a challenging aspect of vertical leader development practices in the quest to transform leaders. And finally, strategic aspect within the L&D function was discussed as a means of improving vertical leader development practices in the institution.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study. The chapter begins with the summary of the research followed by a brief discussion the key findings which are based on the research questions. This is followed by addressing the managerial implications in terms of what needs to be done with respect to the underlying theory of the study. The chapter is then concluded by outlining limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to investigate the practices of vertical leader development at a higher education institution in the North West Province, South Africa. The study is outlined in five chapters, with the first chapter introducing vertical leader development practices, the research setting, problem statement and the objectives of the study. The second chapter detailed some of the most recent and relevant literature in relation to vertical leader development practices in higher education. It also discussed Complexity Leadership Theory as a framework that could underlie vertical leader development practices. In chapter three a discussion was presented that motivated why this study was approached from a qualitative methodological perspective. It outlined how the purposive sample was selected and how semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from 15 participants. It also detailed how the data was analysed using thematic analysis. The findings were discussed in chapter four in line with the recent literature.

The key research findings emerged from the following objectives:

The primary objective:

- To investigate the practices of vertical leader development at a higher education institution in North West Province.

The secondary objectives:

- To describe the role and importance of vertical leader development practices in a higher education institution.
- To identify and discuss the challenges associated with vertical leader development practices as experienced by the leaders at a higher education institution.
- To provide recommendations on how to deal with challenges posed by vertical leader development practices in a higher education institution.

This study managed to address all the objectives set out by the researcher. However, due to the lack of vertical leader development practices at the institution extensive themes were not obtained to address the primary objective. This is not to say that the objective was not met, because it was. Rather that more in-depth reflection by participants could have further enriched the findings in this respect. Nonetheless, the secondary objectives were all achieved with rich and contextual findings. As the institution had recently embarked on large-scale transformation, this theme dominated the L&D space within which participants identified relevance for vertical leader development. The role and importance, as well as challenges and recommendations to improve vertical leader development practices were detailed. Moreover, a Complexity Leadership Theory was presented as a novel research perspective.

5.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Since Petrie (2014) suggested vertical leader development as a specific focus of developing leaders, there has not been much published studies on the topic. This research makes a scholarly contribution in this regard. The main contribution of the study was proposing Complexity Leadership Theory principles as facets of vertical leader development which may serve as a basis for further empirical research. To date no such research was found in peer-reviewed scholarly publications. The findings emerged from the exploratory qualitative approach the researcher has taken to obtain rich and deep contextual data.

5.4 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

On the basis of this study the following recommendations to the L&D division of the institution concerning the challenges outlined are proposed:

- a) Develop an L&D strategy that positions vertical leader development as a competitive advantage. This is to ensure that the institution prioritizes resources to enable the on-going implementation of vertical leader development practices.
- b) Draft policies with clear objectives that guide the implementation of vertical leader development practices. This must be cascaded to the various levels of management in the institution to ensure that leaders across the institution receive the vertical capacities needed to perform more effectively.
- c) Conducting thorough needs analysis and gauge the input of those who will take part in the vertical leader development programs.
- d) Adopting a leadership philosophy based on a complexity mind-set that will serve as a compass to direct the vertical leader development focus with regards to what capacities are needed.

- e) Maintaining an ethical stance towards vertical leader development practices.
- f) Invest in partnering with vertical leader development specialists and with time develop such expertise within the institution to ensure that the institution maintains a cost-effective approach in his respect.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Qualitative research cannot and does not seek to generalize the findings (Flick, 2007). Therefore this research does not make any claims about vertical leader development practices in contexts other than the organization under analysis. The findings concerning Complexity Leadership Theory in vertical development need to be further verified empirically to contribute to a body of scientific knowledge before any valid and reliable claims can be made in this regard.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The researcher recommends that quantitative research, particularly survey and intervention research be conducted based on the constructs uncovered in this study. Future leader development practices, particularly research drawing from the field of leadership coaching may find this study useful in expanding these constructs and develop appropriate interventions.

5.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided a summary of the research as well as the major findings. The study showed that vertical leader development practices were not prioritized enough at the institution. Given its current disruption in the form of transformation, the study further found that vertical leader development has an important role in how leaders learn how to cope and succeed in the face of complexities. Complexity Leadership Theory was found to be a useful framework through which vertical leader development could be enacted. The chapter also presented specific limitations of the study and recommendations for the institution. Finally, the chapter presented future research directions that could further strengthen advances in vertical lead development practices.

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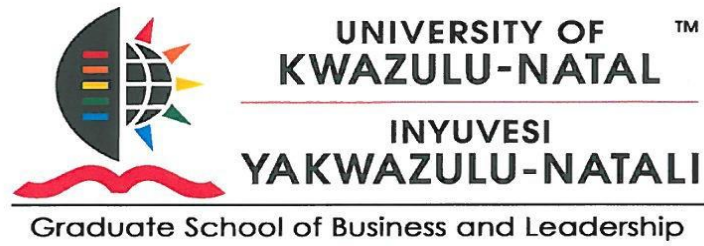
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Informed consent



Date: 03 October 2017

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Title of the research project:

An analysis of vertical leader development practices at a higher education institution in the North West Province, South Africa.

Investigators: Mr. G.M. Strong & Dr. B.Z. Chummun

Ethics reference number: HSS/1726/017M (UKZN) / NWU-GK-2017-039 (NWU)

Contact details

0745013254 / 031 260 8943

grant.strong@nwu.ac.za

chummunb@ukzn.ac.za

Greetings,

Thank you for taking the time to familiarize yourself with my research and I hope that you will consider taking part in the study.

My name is Grant Strong, I am employed at the North West University as a senior lecturer / consultant psychologist at the Institute of Psychology and Well-being where I pursue in keen interest in leadership and people development. Therefore, I am currently studying towards the **Master of Commerce in Leadership Studies** degree at the Graduate School of Business Leadership, University of KwaZulu Natal. This research will contribute towards fulfilling the requirements for the degree.

What is this research about?

- Modern day organisations are faced with the conundrum of rapid and complex large-scale change that need to be negotiated successfully if they are to remain relevant and sustainable. Therefore, there is a growing demand on leaders to personally adapt and change in their approach to leadership in order to find clarity amidst complex issues and see opportunities within chaotic environments to not only survive, but thrive. The higher education sector in South Africa is no exception to the above, as is evident by the recent on-going student protests and governance disputes as symptoms of a difficult transformation process.
- The problem with leader development is that evidence-based research has not kept pace with the many commercialized leader development interventions in the market and return on investment on these interventions are often lacking. Hence, there is consensus in the field that more research that speak to specific contexts in leader development is needed.
- The aim and purpose of this research is to understand and describe the lived experiences of senior managers with respect to their development as leaders. The study is expected to include between 9 and 12 senior managers across three campuses of this institution. The findings will be used to make recommendations to the learning and development team and possibly contribute to the broader research in the field through publication.

Why have you been invited to participate in the study?

- You are an ideal candidate for this study as you are a senior manager and have gone through a long process of personal and professional development. Your experiences as a developing leader and ability to reflect meaningfully on this subject may be invaluable for those who still to undergo such development.

- We are therefore inviting you to participate in a semi-structured interview exploring leader development practices.

What will be expected of you?

- We would like to humbly request that you set aside between 30-45 minutes of your time for an interview. Besides gathering of biographical information to contextualise the findings, no other forms of data will be required from you. The researcher will travel to where you are, and if you choose to, the interview can be conducted in your office at your convenience. Otherwise, a suitable and private facility will be arranged near you.
- Therefore, except offering up your time, there is no cost to your participation.
- You are not expected to prepare anything for the interview, as we are interested only in your personal reflections. You do not have to speak about anything which you do not feel comfortable with.
- We would like to request that you take some time to read the information presented under the permission to consent section, should you wish to participate. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this study that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how your findings will be used.
- Your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to say no if you do not wish to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

Will you gain anything from taking part in this research?

- There will be no monetary gain from participating in the study.
- This research could be potentially valuable to your organisation as the main purpose of such a Master of Commerce research project is to try and solve a challenging business or organizational problem. The findings may be useful for learning and development strategy development and contribute to the improvement of leader development at your organisation.
- Although there is no guaranteed direct benefit for participation for you personally, we hope that by reflecting on your lived-experience you may become more purposefully aware of your own leader development process, even though it is an interview and not an intervention.

What ethical procedures are followed and are there any risks involved?

- This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.
- The study is categorized as low risk. However, due to the nature of reflecting on personal lived experiences you may feel some discomfort if your leadership journey has been characterized by periods of stress and uncertainty. Should you feel distressed as a result of your participation, we have made arrangements with NWU's staff wellness for you to see a counsellor for a debriefing session at no cost to you. Please see the separate information leaflet for the details of this service.

How will we protect your confidentiality and who will see or listen to your findings?

- Anonymity of your findings will be protected by the researchers. A number, and not your name, will be assigned to your research results, and your data will only note this number (e.g. participant 1), and not your name.
- The researcher will make use of a voice recorder to capture your responses, which will later be transcribed by himself. Your privacy will be respected by making sure that all audio recordings and transcripts are stored under password protected files on his work desktop computer, to which he alone has access. The typed transcripts will be stored in a secure locked cabinet in files which contain only a number of the participant and not the name. A separate list which has the names and numbers of participants will be stored in another secure cabinet to which only the researchers has access.
- All data, both electronic and hard copy will be archived for 5 years. After this time, all data will be destroyed.
- A copy of the written dissertation will be made available to the learning and development manager at your institution. The researcher will also prepare a powerpoint presentation for the learning and development team and an invitation will be sent to all participants of the study.
- Finally, the findings of the study will be submitted for consideration to be published in an academic peer reviewed journal.

Is there anything else you should know or do?

- Please contact the researchers should you wish to confirm or make enquiries about any other aspect of the study.
- In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at (provide contact details) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:
 - Mrs Mariette Snyman

Humanities and Social Science Ethics (HSSREC) Research Office,
Govan Mbeki Building, Westville Campus, Private Bag X54001, DURBAN 4000
Tel: 031 260 8350 Snymanm@ukzn.ac.za
Researcher: Grant Strong (0745013254)
Supervisor: Dr. B.Z. Chummun (031 260 8943)

- Please also feel free to contact the office of the registrar at your institution to confirm or make enquiries regarding the above.

Sincerely,

Grant Strong

Declaration by the participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in the research study titled: **An analysis of vertical leader development practices at a higher education institution in the North West Province, South Africa.**

I declare that:

- I have read this information/it was explained to me by a trusted person in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- The research was clearly explained to me.
- I understand the purpose and procedures of the study
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person getting the consent from me, as well as the researcher and all my questions have been answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be handled in a negative way if I do so

Appendix 2: Semi-structured interview schedule



Title of the research project:

An analysis of vertical leader development practices at a higher education institution in the North West Province, South Africa.

Semi-structured Interview Schedule	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The interviewer will use probes in order to obtain in-depth information when deemed necessary. 	
Primary Research Objective	Key interview themes
<p>1. To investigate the practices of vertical leader development at a higher education institution in North West Province.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the complex challenges that your organisation is faced with in the higher education sector? How are these complex challenges managed in your organisation? What could have better prepared you to deal with these complexities, on a personal level?
<p>2. To describe the role and importance of vertical leader development practices in a higher education institution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you reflect on your development as a leader here at your organisation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were important milestones? What do you value most about your transition into a leadership?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How has your journey of becoming a leader impacted on you at a personal level?
<p>3. To identify and discuss the challenges associated with vertical leader development practices as experienced by the leaders at a higher education institution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you please reflect on what were the most challenges aspects of becoming a leader who is able to deal with the demands of your job?
<p>4. To provide recommendations on how to deal with challenges posed by vertical leader development practices in a higher education institution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your views on leader development practices in your organisation given the challenges you mentioned? • What would you recommend to enhance leader development practices at the organisation?

Appendix 3: Gatekeeper permission letter



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-4800
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Learning & Development
Tel: 018 299 4979
Email: stephen.isebela@nwu.ac.za

28 August 2017

Grant Strong

UKZN, Graduate School of Business Leadership
Student number: 216069155

Dear Grant Strong

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

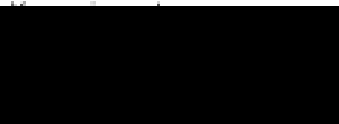
We refer to your request for permission from People & Culture: Learning & Development to conduct research towards your Master of Commerce (Leadership Studies) degree. We note that the title of the research project is:

An analysis of vertical leader development practices at a higher education institution in the North West Province, South Africa.

After careful review of your research proposal, we can hereby confirm that, pending ethical clearance obtained from your university, you are granted gatekeeper's permission to conduct the research. It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by conducting semi-structured interviews with staff on Matikeng, Potchefstroom and Vaal campuses. Staff members are to be contacted through the SDF and Development Manager, based at the Institutional Office. Please note the following is to be provided to all participants:

- An ethical clearance number
- The research title, details of researcher and supervisor
- A consent form to be signed by each participant
- Approval letter from the registrar at North West University

Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.



Stephen Isebela
SDF & Development manager

Original details: (c:\p030304) \M&P\PEOPLE & CULTURE\L & D\3. Human Resources\3.5 Training\3.5.2 Courses\2017\PMR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.docx
28 August 2017

Appendix 4: Ethical clearance



28 September 2017

Mr Grant Martin Strong (216069155)
Graduate School of Business & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Strong,

Protocol reference number: HSS/1726/017M

Project title: An analysis of vertical leader development practices at a higher education institution in the North West Province, South Africa

Approval Notification – Expedited Approval

In response to your application received on 13 September 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods **must** be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Sheruka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Bibi Zaheenah Chummun
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Muhammad Hoque
Cc School Administrator: Ms Zarina Bulyraj

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
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Appendix 4: Turnitin Report

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