Faculty’s academic intellectual leadership: the intermediary relations with universities’ organizational components

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ABSTRACT
In line with ‘the entrepreneurial university’ discourse, managerialism and performative culture brought new expectations to faculty such as developing online programmes/courses, carrying out training for professionals, obtaining research funds, leading projects in cooperation with industry/business, collaborating with colleagues from various disciplines, participating in international networks and representing their disciplines and institutions. These new duties and the traditional roles of academics, as knowledge producer and public intellectual, constitute their intellectual leadership. Given these new circumstances, it is important to investigate the influence of universities’ organizational components to understand how university managers can support academics’ intellectual leadership. This research aims to explore intermediary relations between communication, climate and managerial practice flexibility in universities and academics’ intellectual leadership. Quantitative data were collected from 937 Turkish faculty via an online questionnaire and analysed using Path analyses. Analysis revealed that faculty, by their intellectual leadership behaviours, contribute to the development of their disciplines, institutions and society, and that communication in universities has a strong impact on faculty’s intellectual leadership by mediation of the organizational climate and managerial flexibility regarding scholarly practices. Consequently, university managers should establish functional communication systems in their institutions to generate a positive atmosphere and to maximize the efficiency of institutional practices.

Introduction
Modern universities have attempted to develop their entrepreneurial capacity since the global financial crises (mainly in the Western world) in the 1970s (Clark, 1998; Zilwa, 2005). Although ‘entrepreneurial university’ discourse includes academic, social and economic entrepreneurship, today’s universities focus mostly on income generation initiatives to overcome impediments resulting from governmental budget cuts (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1997; Mars & Rios-Aguilar, 2010; McClure, 2016; Subotzky, 1999; Yokoyama, 2006). With their increasing income production, modern universities started to evolve into large corporations managed by professional administrators as a substitute for the collegial (or clan) approach (Aypay, 2001; Birnbaum, 1988; Blackmore & Sachs, 2000). However, the core of universities still consists of their scholarly communities; therefore, these professional administrators cannot deal with assorted new duties by the ‘managerialism’ approach alone (McCaffery, 2010; Shattock, 2003). They still have a strong need for the faculty’s inclusion in university management via their guidance and expertise in academic matters as well as the faculty’s contribution to their university’s budget by means of their teaching and research (Clark, 2001; Kezar & Eckel, 2004; Rayner, Fuller, McEwen, & Roberts, 2010; Shattock, 2006).

Accordingly, many new expectations and responsibilities were added to faculty’s traditional duties of being a knowledge producer and disseminator such as developing online programmes/courses,
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together become a full mediator ($\beta = .40[=.16 + .24]$). As a result, organizational communication has a powerful influence on both organizational climate ($\beta = .92$) and MFRSP ($\beta = .85$): Therefore, the quality of organizational communication affects faculty’s AIL through the agency of its contributions to the positiveness of climate and the extension of MFRSP in universities.

Discussion and conclusion

In this study, the researchers explored the influence of organizational components in universities on faculty’s leadership behaviours. They followed the AIL theory developed by Macfarlane (2011) to examine faculty’s self-evaluation of their leadership behaviours and asserted that organizational climate as a reflection of the general atmosphere in universities affects faculty’s professional motivation. Furthermore, it was concluded that managerial support through academic units as part of the work environment in universities enhances faculty’s scholarly productivity, and that the quality of communication as a consequence of positive interactions between senior administrators and colleagues benefits the faculty’s academic leadership both in its management and the scholarly community. Therefore, a theoretical model was formulated that includes direct and indirect relations between faculty’s AIL and communication, climate and MFRSP in universities, which was then tested using Path Analysis.

The researchers firstly tested the pre-model to discover the degree of the relationship between organizational communication in universities and faculty’s AIL. They found that the quality of the communication explains 40% of faculty’s behaviours within all dimensions of intellectual leadership. This result demonstrates that the quality of communication in universities is one of the major organizational components, and effective communication channels create various opportunities for faculty to formally or informally deliver, as components of AIL, their ideas/inputs to the management of their institutions, knowledge and discoveries to the scholarly community and expert opinions about social issues to the public.

However, the findings of the model when tested showed that the relationship between organizational communication and faculty’s AIL is fully mediated by organizational climate and MFRSP in universities. Moreover, the testing indicated that organizational climate explains 17% of faculty’s intellectual leadership behaviours, but 16% of the effect of climate on faculty’s AIL arises from reflection of organizational communication on the climate in universities (as 40% of the total relationship between organizational communication and faculty’s AIL). Similarly, Uslu and Arslan (2015) reported a significant relation between organizational communication and faculty’s AIL while the relationship between organizational communication and climate was at a very high level. Arabacı (2011) similarly accepted organizational communication as a dimension of the organizational climate in universities.

Another finding of the model testing is that MFRSP explains 28% of faculty’s AIL. However, 24% of the impact of climate on faculty’s intellectual leadership results from the contribution of organizational communication to the effectiveness of MFRSP (as 60% of the total relationship between organizational communication and faculty’s AIL). Likewise, Uslu and Arslan (2015) found that there is a very strong relationship between communication and MFRSP in universities, in addition to a significant relation between organizational communication and faculty’s AIL. Bakan and Büyükmeşe (2004) also argued that receiving regular updates about institutional opportunities and information related to organizations/events in universities helps academics to effectively benefit from academic support mechanisms, as well as empowering their scholarly connections with colleagues from various disciplines.

The findings given above clearly reveal that quality of communication is an important determinant both for organizational climate and MFRSP in universities and that organizational communication contributes greatly to the display of faculty’s intellectual leadership behaviours through the agency of its influence on organizational climate and MFRSP. This general result confirms the assertion of Uslu and Welch (2016, p. 1): ‘organizational communication has a greater impact on their [senior academics’] intellectual leadership by its reflections on climate and institutional facilities in universities than its direct effects.’ In this regard, it may be stated that faculty’s intellectual leadership performance generally differs according to the institutional and managerial support related to their scholarly activities, and
Acknowledgement

This article was generated using the data-set in the first author's PhD dissertation, which was completed under the guidance of the second author.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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