Strategic Management Quarterly
December 2015, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 1-22
ISSN: 2372-4951 (Print), 2372-496X (Online)
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Published by American Research Institute for Policy Development
DOI: 10.15640/smq.v3n4a1
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.15640/smq.v3n4a1

The United Kingdom Ministry of Defence – the Case for Followership as a key Element of Leadership Development

Professor Derrick J Neal[1], Mr Petros S Boutselis[2] & Mr Jim Bennett[3]

Abstract

Using the Kelley (1992) Followership Style instrument this study explores the role and perceptions of Followership within the UK Ministry of Defence. In particular, within the Armed Services and the Civil Service it was apparent from the literature that only the RAF formally recognised the role of Followership within their Leadership staff development programmes, hence the research aimed to see whether this was reflected in self-perceptions of Followership Style and the extent to which it is applied within the organisation. The analysis concluded that the analysed sample (298 responses) produced an atypical profile compared to other studies that have used the instrument. The RAF showed statistically significant higher scores than the other Armed Services or the Civil Servants and scores increased with Rank/Grade. The analysis also highlighted that the individuals seemed not to be recognised as good Followers by their leaders, they appeared not to recognise their reports as good Followers and in all cases the organisation seemed not to recognise their value. These aspects provide scope for further research to better understand the organisational culture, processes and practices that appear to act as a barrier to the extraction of the benefits of having good Followers even in an area where Star Followers dominate.

'Leaders should acknowledge followership as an ethical endeavour, and foster followers who act in good conscience' (Royal Australian Navy, 2010, p.67).

[1]Cranfield University, Defence Academy of the UK Shrivenham, UK. d.j.neal@cranfield.ac.uk, Ph +44 1793785911, Fax +441793785871
[2]Cranfield University, Defence Academy of the UK, Shrivenham UK. p.boutselis@cranfield.ac.uk, Ph +44 (0) 1793 785493, Fax +44 (0) 1793785871
[3]Merlin Project Team, Box 275. , AgustaWestland Helicopters, Lysander Road, Yeovil BA20 2YB. jim.bennett940@mod.uk, Ph +44(0)1935 702130, Fax +44 (0)1935 703688

The UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) was subjected to a major review in 2011 in response to the assertion that "the existing departmental management structure was demonstrably not working well, and had contributed to the Department's financial crisis" (MOD 2011, p.9).The Defence Reform Report and the requirement for the MOD to fundamentally change the way it conducts its business was endorsed by the MOD and its findings have since been translated into the Defence Transformation programme. The change will require strong, decisive leadership and both acceptance and commitment from the followers in the organisation who will be required to deliver the change.

The Defence Transformation programme is the greatest organisational change to UK defence since the establishment of the unified MOD in 1964. This transformation activity is being carried out whilst the MOD is engaged on operations, experiencing significant budget and manpower reductions. The consequence of reducing the MOD's personnel levels is that those individuals remaining will in effect need to take a more proactive role and accept greater responsibility for the delivery of the organisational transformation. However, it is also the case that in the MOD's 'Have your say' staff survey the most significant finding was the lack of staff confidence in the change leadership skills at the senior levels of the Department (MOD, 2013).

Leadership has a key role to play in the delivery of change but equally all leaders are also followers and it can be argued that followership is just as important as leadership within the context of delivering major change.Leadership has been extensively researched over the years by many academics resulting in a large number of definitions; however, two common themes emerge:

- Leadership is an influence relationship between leaders and followers (Adair, 2008, Bass, 1997 & Daft, 2011).
- Leaders are a source of inspiration to their followers (Bass &Avolio, 1990, Zhu, Avolio, Riggio&Sosik, 2011).

With specific regard to the followership dimension there are two dominant academic theories of leadership: situational and transformational. Hersey & Blanchard (1993) stated that leaders adapted their style of leadership in response to the development/maturity of their followers; this was defined as situational leadership. Burns (1978) was the first to identify the theory of transactional and transformational leadership; Bass (1985) refined this work developing transformational leadership as being able to inspire followers to act not for themselves but for the group's common good.

The subject of followership has not been as well researched (as highlighted by the internet search results given in Table 1) or as well understood as leadership and due to the scarcity of the research a definitive term for followership has not become widely accepted. Individual academics have generated their own definitions for followers and followership based on its relationship to leaders and leadership (Crossman & Crossman, 2011).

Search tool	Leadership titles	Followership titles	Ratio
EBSCO (academic papers and journals)	129,769	744	174/1
Amazon UK (books)	71,975	187	384/1

Table 1: Ratio of Leadership to Followership academic journal and books in 2013. **Source:** Author.

Notwithstanding this, followership has now become an accepted part of the leadership and management taxonomy with the first research by Follett (1949). More focused research into followership has been carried out in the last 25 years with the most recognised academic literature being authored by Kelley (1988, 1992 and 2008), Chaleff (2008 and 2009) and Kellerman (2007, 2008). Kelley (1992) wrote about the need for effective or exemplary followers who were enthusiastic, intelligent, self - reliant, independent thinkers who are actively engaged and committed to implementing their organisation's goals. Kelley (2008) revised his definition of exemplary followers renaming them 'Star Followers'.

Chaleff (2008) argued that effective followers must act courageously and become partners in their organisation. Whilst Kellerman (2008) stated that the most effective followers are diehards for their organisation and its values. Kellerman went further by offering a definition of followership as "a relationship…between subordinates and superiors, and a response (behavior), of the former to the latter" (Kellerman, 2008, p. xx).

Using the UK MOD as the vehicle this paper will explore the followership styles that exist within an Operating Centre which is staffed by all arms of the military and the Civil Service and covers a wide spectrum of Ranks/Grades and set against the backdrop of the UK MOD undergoing a transformational change programme.

Leadership and Followership

Leadership studies have covered many dimensions of the subject including, the personal characteristics, traits and styles that leaders are born with, through to behaviours that can be learned and adopted through education and experience.

One strand of research found that leadership was based on situational constraints, individuals with unique skills and attributes step up to lead as a situation unfolds (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano& Dennison, 2003).

Situational leadership theory was developed from the Contingency theories. The Hersey & Blanchard Situational Leadership theory dates back to 1977 and proposed that leaders should adapt an appropriated type of behaviour based on the level of maturity of their subordinates (Yukl, 2006). 'Subordinate' was used as a synonym for the term 'follower'. The theory went through many iterations leading to a revised definition where the correct leadership style is now based on the follower readiness level (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993). The follower's maturity levels must be assessed in order to determine their readiness and from that leaders adapt their styles based on how ready and willing the follower is to perform the required tasks, in terms of competency and motivation.

"The focus in the situational approach to leadership is on observed behavior, not on any hypothetical inborn or acquired ability or potential for leadership. The emphasis is on the behavior of leaders and their group members (followers) and various situations", (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993, p. 89).

Burns (1978) was the first to identify the theory of transformational leadership stating it occurred when people engage with others in a moral purpose to change for a common goal. This engagement has a transformational effect on leaders and followers alike through aspirational change (Burns, 1978). Burns proposed that "a transforming leader shapes, alters, and elevates the motives, values and goals of followers achieving significant change in the process" (Bolden *et al*., 2003, p.15). In this the importance of the leader-follower relationship is recognised and transformational leadership seeks to change or transform both individuals and organisations. Burns stated that:

"Transforming leadership, while more complex (than transactional), is more potent. The transforming leader recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower… looks for potential motives in followers… The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and evaluation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents", (Burns, 1978, p.4).

Transformational leadership responds to the needs, aspirations and values of followers in order to achieve organisational change. Bass (1985) further refined transformational leadership theory stating it inspires followers to act not for themselves but for the common good of their organisation. The shared responsibility between the leader and the follower to effect organisational change is the key point of transformational leadership.

Sadly the term 'follower' has attracted a negative connotation, Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson & Morris (2006) observed that followership has a stigma attached to it and the term follower is "often linked to negative and demeaning words like passive, weak, and conforming" (p.304).

Agho (2009) noted that followership is viewed negatively and went further to state that followership was "seldom presented as an important trait for any person who aspires to lead others" (p.159). The best method to remove this stigma would be for the organisation's leaders to publicly recognise the value they attach to their followers; demonstrating that followership is an essential trait of leaders and the leadership within the organisation.Berg (1998) stated that good followers were created by leaders who understood their obligation to develop their people and followers must feel they are valued and that their views, even if they differ from their leaders, are respected.

The organisation must first establish and identify what it defines as good followership and recognise that good leadership must include the ability to recognise good followership. Agho (2009) argued that "leaders must develop the skills to integrate effective followership into performance evaluation for all employees" (p. 165). One method to achieve this is to embed followership within the organisation's core ethos. Once embedded, an individual's ability as an active follower must be captured within the competency framework of the organisation along with effective measures of follower performance and the means of developing followership. If an organisation is to capture the true value of followers it is necessary, according to Kellerman, to recognise that "followers are more important to leaders than leaders are to followers" (Kellerman, 2008, p. 242).

Burns (1978) wrote that for transformational leadership to occur required leader and follower engagement. Subsequent research by Baker (2007) indicated that leadership cannot be studied in isolation with only minor consideration given to followers and this echoed the work of Hollander (1992) in stating that leadership and followership were "reciprocal systems" (p.46) that were interdependent.

The key characteristics of followership are:

- The relationship between leaders and followers. Adair (2008) and Bass (1997), propose that with leadership there is a top down influence. The follower-leader relationship is about developing an upwards influence with the follower as an individual or partner, rather than subordinate, based on respect and trust Baker (2007), Bjugstad*et al*. (2006), Crossman & Crossman (2011), Daft (2011), (Hollander, 1992) and (Küpers, 2007).

Effective followers influence their leaders with constructive and upward communication seeking positive transformation in the organisation (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010). Kellerman noted that "Leaders who ignore or dismiss their followers do so at their peril" (2008, p. xxi). Adair (2008) noted that organisations succeed or fail based upon the input and output of their employees. However, employees succeed or fail based upon the leader–follower relationship.

- Followership behaviours. Carsten *et al*. (2010) observed that most research focussed on leadership not followership behaviours. Followership behaviours address the behaviours of individuals acting in relation to the leader and their responses. Baker (2007), Bjugstad*et al*. (2006), Blanchard, Welbourne, Gilmore & Bullock (2009) and Crossman & Crossman (2011). Daft (2011) observed that leaders behaviour can be influenced by followership, just as leaders can develop people into good leaders.

As noted earlier key works on followership with particular emphasis on defining styles, typologies and approaches have been carried out by Chaleff (2008, 2009), Kellerman (2007, 2008) and Kelley (1988, 1992, 2008). In general terms these researchers are in agreement with regard to the range of characteristics that might be used to describe follower categories even if they use different words to name them, eg 'Effective followers[Kelley]' and 'Partner[Chaleff]'. In particular the work of Kelley is fundamental to this study as a questionnaire instrument was produced that helps the researcher to classify primary research findings.

Followers, not leaders, account for 80% of the success that organisations enjoy therefore, followers are the engine room of a good organisation (Kelley 1992). Kelley developed a follower theory and style to complement the contemporary transformational leadership styles. Kelley's followership theory first published in 1988 and then 1992, has since become one of the most widely cited followership theories. Kelley has since reviewed this theory in 2008 but the principle remains unchanged. Kelley identified two primary characteristics of followership; independent critical thinking and active engagement, as shown in Figure 1.Kelley used these characteristics to identify five followertypologies. Kelley (2008) defined the follower styles as;

Passive. Kelley renamed this style Sheep in 2008. The least effective follower, sheep are passive looking to the leader for direction.

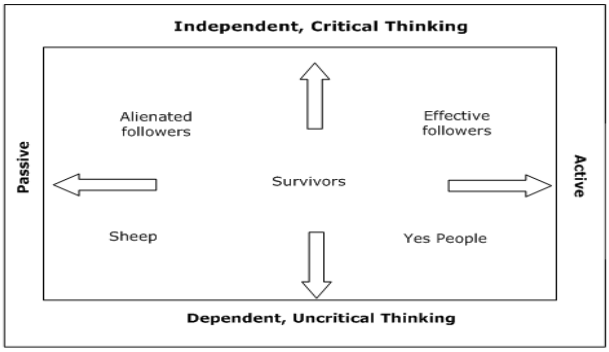


Figure 1: Followership Style Model. Source: Adapted from Kelley 1992.

Conformist. Kelley renamed this style Yes-People in 2008. Enthusiastic, positive but ineffective. Reliant on the leader to do the thinking.

Alienated followers. Critical thinkers with plenty of enthusiasm, but unoriginal. They do not move in a positive direction.

Pragmatics. Pragmatics preserve the status quo and will "sit on the fence and see which way the wind blows" (Kelley, 2008, p.7). Pragmatics do what they need to in order to survive.Kelley viewed these styles of follower as ineffective, with unhelpful characteristics that do not benefit the leader or organisation. Kelley went on to identify a final follower style:

Effective followers. Kelley renamed this style as Star follower in 2008. "Star followers think for themselves, are very active and have very positive energy" (Kelley, 2008, p.8). Stars will challenge the leader if they do not agree with the direction the leader has taken offering constructive alternatives to the leader (Kelley, 2008).

"Effective followers share a number of qualities" (Kelley, 1992, p.144). These qualities are:

(1) Self-management – Able to manage themselves effectively.
(2) Commitment – Both to the organisation and to a purpose, principle or individual.
(3) Competence and Focus –Maximise their effectiveness.
(4) Courage - Be credible, honest and courageous.

To become an effective follower requires developing these followership qualities. Organisational transformation can be achieved more efficiently and effectively if it is recognised that the best method of delivering the change is internally through the organisation's own followers. It is therefore in an organisation's best interest to develop individuals as 'Star Followers' with the ability to operate as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Blanchard *et al*. (2009) researched Kelley's followership theory and concluded that the theory was robust but required further research. This is unsurprising given the little amount of research that has been devoted to followership. An empirical followership research study by Carsten *et al*., (2010) found that followership aligned with Kelley's theory and the research showed that followership was across a continuum ranging from passive through active, to proactive.

Followership within the context of the Public Sector and Military

Organisations that recognise that leadership and followership throughout the organisation represent a valuable resource put themselves in a position to improve performance overall. Much of this relates to the organisational culture where in the past (and to a degree still prevalent today) the idea of challenging leadership was viewed as 'whistle blowing' and not good practice if you had aspirations of promotion.

The National Health Service (NHS) provides an example of this issue and The King's Fund engaged Professor Keith Grint from Warwick Business School to give advice on the recognition of followership in the NHS (Grint& Holt, 2011). This activity was driven by a number of factors, including the requirement for the NHS to become more efficient and accountable. There was an attitude prevalent within the NHS that specialist consultants, especially surgeons, were the leaders within the organisation and not to be questioned. The absence of an open culture which allowed consultant's decisions to be questioned without fear of reprisal highlighted the need for courageous followers to be embedded at all levels of the NHS organisation.

Some military organisations have identified and embraced the concept of followership:

- The Australian Defence Force (ADF) embraced followership for all its personnel (ADF, 2007). Additionally the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) incorporated followership into its service ethos (RAN, 2010) and followership forms part of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) core values (RAAF, 2013).
- The Royal Air Force (RAF) recognised the value of followership to the organisation and was heavily influenced by the work of Grint to the point that he edited RAF publications (Abbott, 2005) and his work was incorporated into RAF leadership policy (RAF 2013). Followership is incorporated within the RAFs core ethos and leadership development programmes (RAF, 2013) and reporting structures (RAF, 2012).

- The United States military has recognised the utility of followership. Examples include the United States Coast Guard (USCG) and the United States Air Force (USAF). The USCG has stated that "all Coast Guard members are followers" (USCG, 2006, p. 3-2) and followership forms part of the USCG competence and leadership development framework. The USAF is so committed to followership that it forms part of its leadership doctrine (USAF, 2011), leadership development programme and competency frameworks for all uniformed and civilian members. The success of the USAF commitment to followership is that its personnel have become followership subject matter experts. Two of the most recognised articles on followership have been written by USAF personnel:
- Dynamic Followership: The Prerequisite for Effective Leadership by Latour&Rast (2004).
- The Ten Rules of Good Followership by Meilinger (2001).

The MOD provides advanced leadership development programmes. A review of the career development courses run by the three services (RN, Army & RAF) was generally strong on the leadership theme as was the case for MOD Civil Servants. However, it was really only the RAF that had taken the common approach of Action Centred Leadership that was a feature of all leadership development programmes and made changes.

Following a review in the mid 2000s the RAF had moved away from this to a broader appreciation of leadership development such that it reflected 5 core areas, namely, Command Leadership Management, Mission Command, Followership, Leadership of Change and Ethics. Agho (2009) argued that organisations "do not pay attention to developing effective follower …skills because of the erroneous assumption that people know instinctively how to follow" (p. 159). Latour&Rast (2004) go further into the need to develop followers declaring:

"Developing dynamic followership is a discipline…Without followership, a leader at any level will fail to produce effective institutions. Valuing followers and their development is the first step toward cultivating effective transformational leaders" (p.2).Agho (2009) recommended that development programmes must "highlight the concept and practice of effective followership" (p.166) and that leaders need to be trained "to promote and manage effective followership" (p.166).

One way of capturing the importance of followership is to include it within an organisation's competency framework and the RAF and USCG have leadership competencies that include followership. These frameworks define the skills and traits each organisation expects from its followers within a defined boundary for both the leader and follower.

The disadvantage of this competence is that very effective and able followers can go un-recognised. In fact, a courageous follower who challenges their leader offering alternative means to achieving an objective, may be marked down for their ability to support their leader and to work within a team. This is because they have been seen to question authority or to 'rock the boat'. Followers who are dissuaded from raising concerns can become isolated individuals and become negative or even toxic to the organisation. This could have a detrimental effect to the MOD in general as courageous followers are the most effective followers in the organisation.

Incorporating followership into leadership development programmes creates more effective organisations.

- The USCG devotes a full year to followership within its Leadership curriculum (Woodward, 1975).
- Due to their position in the organisation the ADF uses its followers to comment on a leaders' effectiveness through 360 degree feedback (ADF, 2007).
- The RAF combines formal training with force development, adventurous training and sport to develop leaders and followers. Coaching and mentoring both upwards as well as downwards also employed (RAF, 2013).

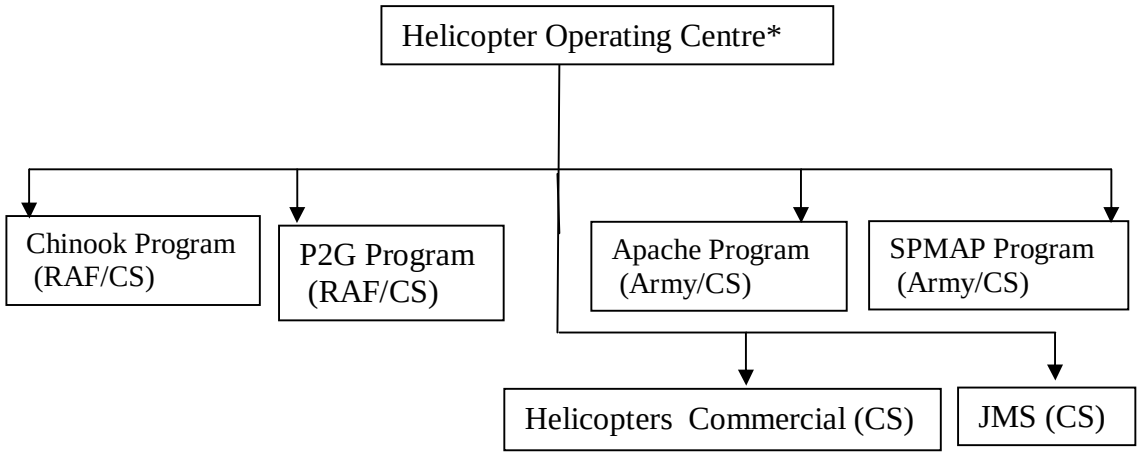
Each organisation has recognised that the followership-leadership relationship is important to their organisations and has added followership to their leadership development programmes.

Research approach

A followership questionnaire, adapted from Kelley's Followership questionnaire, (Kelley,1992) was used for the purpose of generating quantitative data in order to determine the current followership styles within the Helicopter Operating Centre (HOC). The two scales involved are engagement (active/passive) and critical thinking (independent/dependent) and produces the five categories explained earlier in this paper. The questionnaire was selected for two reasons; firstly due to its utility in the field of followership and secondly that it has been validated by researchers such as (Blanchard *et al*., 2009) which gives confidence that the questionnaire is robust for research purposes. Using this questionnaire to measure the types and numbers of followers in an organisation provides a basis to both understand the organisation better and to establish a baseline of followership in the organisation that could be compared with other studies. The questionnaire is given in Appendix A.

The MOD Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S) HOC was chosen for the research for a number of reasons including the spread of services represented and the fact that within the Operating Centre there were discrete programmes, as shown in Figure 2, and each had a different blend of staff. For example, the Chinook and the P2G project teams are staffed by RAF and Civil Servants only, the Apache project is Army and Civil Servants only. The intention was to be able to identify differences by service in addition to more general analysis involving all respondents against variables such as rank and gender. The mix of staff within the HOC is also representative of the DE&S organisation as a whole and therefore provided scope to extrapolate the findings more widely.

A total of 775 questionnaires were circulated to staff which resulted in a response of 298 completed questionnaires (38% response rate) which was reasonably well spread over the ranks in proportion to the number of staff at the various levels. In addition to the questionnaire the research sought to explore the issue of the role of followership within the MOD by way of 1-2-1 interviews with individuals directly involved in the development and delivery of the leadership development courses that form part of staff development.



*. Note this figure does not represent all programs but only those that have discrete staffing combinations. Key to acronyms.

JMS - Joint Modification Service (joint MOD/Augusta Westland helicopter modification management team).
P2G - Puma Mk2 and Gazelle Helicopter Project team.
SPMAP - Special Projects and Military Aircraft Project Team

Figure 2: The Service staffs mixes for the detailed analysis of followership profiles.

In order to facilitate the data analysis the data set was segmented vertically by Rank/Grade where direct equivalence exists between the military services and a notional equivalence exists between the Military Ranks and the Civil Service Grade structure. This resulted in 5 levels as given in Table 2 below,

Level	Military (officers [OF] and other ranks[OR])	Civil Service
5(VHigh)	OF5/6	SCS/B1
4(High)	OF4	B2/C1/C2
3(Mid)	OF3/2	D
2(Low)	OR9-7	E1
1(VLow)	OR6/5	E2

Table 2: Grouping of respondents by Rank/Grade

In light of the numbers of respondents in the various categories in addition to conducting analysis using all 5 levels additional analysis was conducted through the use of 3 categories by joining the VH/H to give Combined High (Higher) and the L/VL to give Combined Low (Lower).

Results

The Role of Followership in staff development

Although the available course literature that was examined as part of the literature survey indicated a lack of consideration of the Followership topic specifically, it was felt necessary to go direct to the organisations responsible for the delivery of the range of courses that staff progress through as they are promoted within their organisations. The researchers wanted to ensure that the topic was not being included under some other banner. The results of the interviews confirmed the analysis from the official course documents and the issue of Followership and Follower development was not something that featured at all strongly in the MOD Civil Service, Royal Navy or Army courses but was explicit in the Royal Air Force leadership development courses. In a couple of cases the term subordinate leader was used but again when investigated it was more in the sense of labelling someone rather than exploring the scope and possibilities of actually developing Star Followers.

The questionnaire results

Measured concepts

The analysis was performed at the individual level and the examination was on the reflection of followership from 2 different perspectives: How the individual perceives their followership style and the extent to which they believe that followership is recognised within the organisation.

The first perspective was approached through the use of Kelley's instrument which uses 2 variables in order to define it, namely 'Independent Thinking' and 'Active Engagement' consisting of 10 measured items each. However, there was a need to introduce additional questions in order to measure the 2nd perspective of interest namely 'Confidence that the benefits of the followership are being recognized'. Expanding the questionnaire ran the risk of negatively impacting on the response rate. To reduce this, 3 of the items used to measure the 'Active Engagement' were replaced by the same number of questions aimed to measure the additional perspective of interest.

Kelly's instrument has been repeatedly tested for its reliability and measurement validity in similar studies ((Blanchard *et al*., 2009, Savage, 2012, Koo & Choi, 2000). However, the introduced amendment to the number of measured items in one of the variables raised some concerns about maintaining the reliability of the scale (Steiner 2003, Takalov & Dennick 2011, Yang & Green 2011, Kamata & Bauer 2008) and in that regard the Categorical Principal Components Analysis (CPCA) process was applied which increased confidence in the unidimensional attribute of both variables and the Cronbach's alpha values of 0.68 for the 'Independent Thinking' and 0.66 for the 'Active Engagement' indicated an acceptable level of internal reliability.

Furthermore, the Spearman's rho correlation of the unchanged 'Independent Thinking' and the amended 'Active Engagement' variables was measured to be 0.77 significant at the 0.01 level, and it made the case that for the sample studied the 2 variables could be considered as producing a single dimension, which we defined as 'Strength of Followership', and that it constituted a continuum ranging from weak to strong (where in Kelley's terms this equates from Sheep to Star Follower). The resulting scatter plot is given in Figure 3 together with the regression line of best fit and is superimposed on the Kelley model that was given in Figure 1.

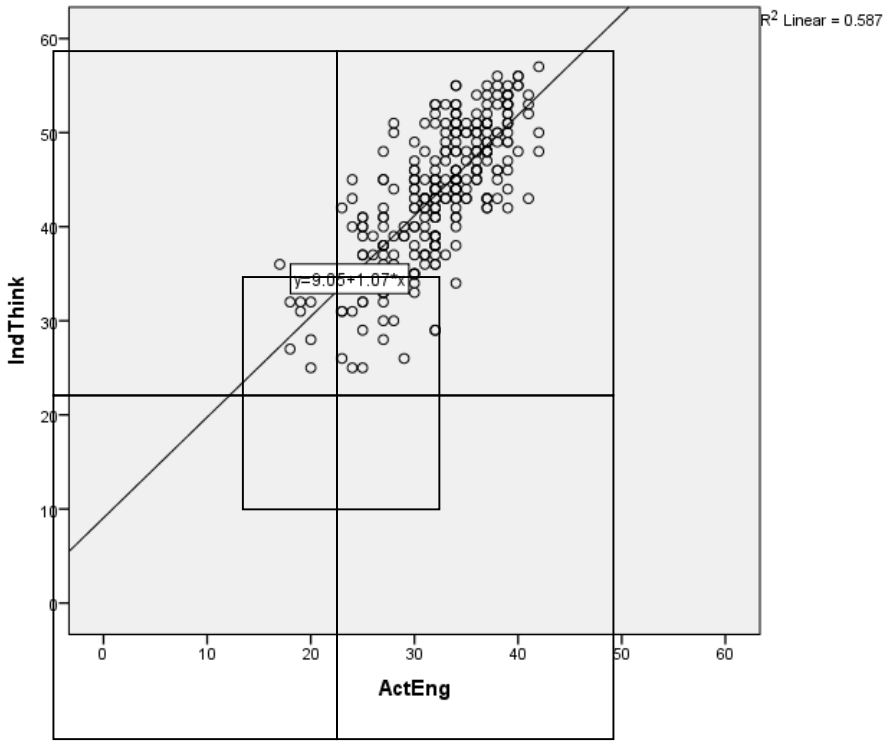


Figure 3: Scatterplot of the responses in Active Engagement vs Independent Thinking

Apart from the fact that the correlation coefficient is 0.77, the best-fit line's function has a slope of 1.07 indicating that the 2 measures have a 1-2-1 relationship ($y - 9.05 \approx x$, the intercept does not go through the origin due to the 3 items removed from the measurement of Active Engagement). The range of possible values for Independent Thinking is [0 , 60] while the respondents' scores range is [25 , 57]. Equally, the range for Active Engagement is [0, 42] while the respondents' scores range is [17 , 42].

The 'Confidence that the benefits of the followership are being recognized' perspective was measured through the answers to the 3 items and tests for reliability and validity generated the following results:

Reliability

- Due to the use of only 3 items, the internal reliability could not be measured through the usual split-half method or Cronbach's alpha. Instead the approach suggested by Babbie (2007) of 'Item Analysis' was applied.
  This involves each single item being measured for its correlation with the aggregated index. In this case Spearman's rho measure of correlation ranged from 0.57 to 0.72 significant at the 0.01 level thus concluding that the composite index is related and can predict responses to the individual items it comprises.

Measurement Validity

- Face validity seems to exist. The individual items measured by Q18, 19 and 20 (see Appendix A) and their combined index/measure seem to be a rational indication of the concept of 'Confidence that the benefits of the followership are being recognized'. The index was not further tested for other validity measurement attributes mainly due to the lack of existing criteria to compare it with. Therefore, the researchers understood that its use should be done with care and the results coming from it were further investigated.

Hypothesis Testing

The 298 respondents were all MOD staff members, of different Ranks/Grades working on specific programmes as part of defined project teams within the HOC as shown earlier in Figure 1. The following hypotheses were tested:

Self-positioning of Followership style

H01: There will be no significant differences between MOD staff in the surveyed sample in terms of their self-positioning on the Strength of Followership continuum based on their Service.

A one-way ANOVA test for the Services[4] indicated that there is enough evidence at the 0.01 level to reject the null hypothesis, while more specifically the Tukey post-hoc test showed that the only contributor to this result at the 0.01 level was RAF having a higher mean value than any of the rest as shown in Figure 4. It is evident from the figure that in all cases the trend in Strength of Followership increases with Rank and that in the case of the RAF even at the Low Rank level the mean score is higher that the High Rank scores for most of the other services.

[4] Services – this refers to each of the Armed Services (Army, RN & RAF) plus the Civil Service.

One can therefore conclude that for this specific sample from the HOC there is enough evidence to support that a difference exists in how individuals, according to their Service, position themselves in terms of Strength of Followership, and RAF staff position themselves higher in this regard than any of the other Services.

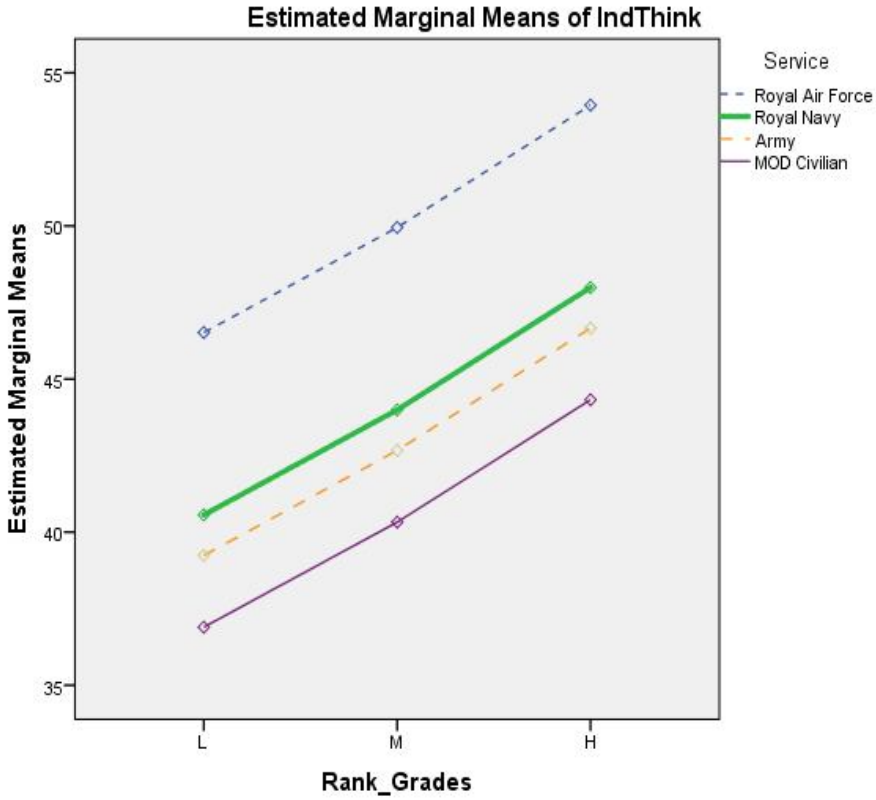


Figure 4: Estimated marginal means of Independent Thinking

H02: There will be no significant difference in the self-positioning of the MOD staff in the surveyed sample on the Strength of Followership continuum based on their Ranks/Grades.

In this case, again following a similar procedure, one can conclude that for this specific sample from the HOC there is enough evidence to support that there is a difference in how individuals, according to their Rank/Grade, position themselves on the Strength of Followership continuum. Post-hoc analysis showed that Low ranks position themselves lower than either the Medium or High ranks, as indicated in Figure 4, significant at the 0.01 level.

H03: There will be no significant differences in the self-positioning of the MOD staff in the surveyed sample on the Strength of Followership continuum based on their Gender.

The data indicates that there is a difference in how individuals according to Gender position themselves on the Strength of Followership continuum with Male respondents scoring higher than Female respondents at the 0.01 level of significance only in the Lower Ranks/Grades.

Confidence that the benefits of followership are being recognized

Analysis of the 'Confidence that the benefits of followership were recognized' (the combination of the 3 items from Q18-20) did not provide any significant results when the examination was with regard to their Service, or Rank/Grade or even the different HOC Programme Teams. However, a Mann-Whitney U test (z-value of -2.6 significant at the 0.01 level) showed that there was a significant difference for Gender with Males scoring higher. Furthermore, Elaborative Modelling analysis showed that when only the Military personnel from the Service were considered then a not very strong (Cramer's V value of 0.33) but significant relationship at the 0.01 level existed among the different Ranks, with the Higher ranks scoring higher that the Lower ranks. Given that this analysis failed to shine any real light on the relationships between the variables further analysis was conducted on each of the items, namely an individual analysis of questions 18-20. A number of crosstabulations were explored to check for relationships between Rank/Grade and Service using a number of coding combinations of the Rank/Grade and Service mix. Although some weak relationships were identified there was not a consistency in the findings to provide any conclusive evidence which in itself is worthy of note and will be covered in the discussion section.

Discussion and Conclusions

The proposition that the MOD generally (with the exception of the RAF) do not actively study or explore the topic of Followership was not only apparent in the course literature for each of the services it was also confirmed by way of interviews with those engaged in the development and delivery of career progression courses.

With this starting point it was the intention of the researchers to look for evidence that the RAF approach to Followership was reflected in the responses to the questionnaire developed by Kelley (1992) and that it would also produce significant differences relative to the other military services and the Civil Servants. The first observation was that the collected data set was atypical as it did not reflect the early work of Kelley and others. The initial work of Kelley was based on an Academic institution, which in itself is not typical of many other organisations, but even the work of Savage, which was based on a military establishment, does not fit closely with the findings from this study.

The fact that virtually all responses were within the Star Follower quadrant (with a few sitting in the Pragmatist quadrant) may be a function of the training and development programmes that the MOD applies to staff as their careers progress. The other factor that could contribute to this aspect is that all respondents are part of project teams and the culture within a selected project team may be one that not only attracts Star Followers but one that promotes the need to apply independent thinking and to be proactive in order to move the project forward.

Analysis confirmed that statistically significant relationships existed between the self-perception of being a Star Follower and the Rank/Grade of the respondent with Higher Ranks/Grades seeing themselves as stronger Star Followers than was the case in the Lower Ranks/Grades. More importantly, over and above this finding the RAF respondents scored higher than all other Services at all ranks in this regard as was shown in Figure 4. It would seem that the explicit inclusion of Followership within RAF leadership training/education flows through into the view held by staff in this regard and this supports the evidence gathered through the literature survey and the 1-2-1 interviews. The gender issue was inconclusive in terms of being generalizable since the only statistically significant difference occurred in the lower Rank/Grade levels where Male respondents scored higher and as such little can be deduced from this aspect. Noting that the data was dominated by Male responses the researchers concluded that scope exists for further research in this area since career opportunities may be shaped by subject specialisation, Service and organisational culture within the MOD generally.

The most interesting finding from this research concerned the responses to questions 18-20 with respect to the confidence that the benefits of being a Star Follower are both exercised and recognised by line managers and the organisation as a whole. Although the 3 items (Q18-20) appeared to constitute a scale with face validity, analysis of the combined responses against Rank/Grade and Service failed to show any meaningful results. The only factor that was shown to be statistically significant was against Gender with Males scoring higher. The researchers considered that by combining the 3 items it was possible that some masking of the individual items was taking place and for that reason analysis was further conducted for each of the questions in isolation.

However, even the analysis of the individual items failed to provide any statistically significant findings, so in essence the data showed that staff see themselves as Star Followers but fail to see this as contributing to the performance of their project or the HOC in general. In terms of Q18 (looking up through the organisation) this may well be a function of the operating processes and practices – an area for further research.

More interestingly Q19 (looking down through the organisation) did not show that staff who consider themselves as Star Followers apply this to their line reports. This is particularly interesting since one might reasonably expect that in a line management role they would have scope to recognise good followership and practice what they preach.

The findings from this research confirmed that the RAF scored higher than the other services on the self-perception of being a Star Follower and that in all cases this became stronger with the increase in Rank/Grade. Although some of the analysis showed limited issues around the subject of Gender it was clear that scope exists for more detailed research in this area. In particular this paper suggests that further research/study should have a focus on the role and impact that organisational structure, processes and culture have on the ability for an individual who demonstrates strong Followership characteristics to be able to exercise them within the work environment.

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