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Evaluation of Leadership Behaviors of Middle Administrators in Higher Education through Reflection

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ABSTRACT We live in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex world, where universities try to keep up with all kinds of developments and developing and implementing new and diversified curricula. Moreover, the way department heads exhibit their leadership practices is becoming more and more complicated because universities keep struggling for their own survival as a result of these changes. At universities, department heads often perform a middle-management role depending on the organizational structure of each university and this role is usually taken for granted and is unquestioned. The goal of this study was to evaluate the leadership practices and behaviors exhibited by the middle level administrators including department heads, supervisors and coordinators at universities in North Cyprus.The research approach was both quantitive and qualitative including a variety of data sources including open-ended surveys, interviews used together with the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI).

INTRODUCTION

Leadership development within organizations has received increased attention and investment as a possible source of competitive advantage (Allen and Hartman 2008; Day 2000). Broadly defined, leadership development involves expanding the capacity of organizational members to work together to deal effectively with unanticipated problems such as organizational change (Day 2000). Leaders in organizations are expected to continuously improve their capabilities that include self-awareness, self-confidence, self-regulation, adaptability, and self-motivation (Day 2000; Hollenbeck et al. 2006; Goker and Gunduz 2014).

A self-analysis of the leadership behaviors of middle administrators in higher education through reflection is essential because self-awareness of leadership practices and behaviors exhibited by middle administrators can enable them to a reflective learning community. This learning community model assumes that sustainable change, resulting in improved teaching and learning, is best generated when educators engage in collective learning processes characterized by reflective analysis of current conditions, experimentation with new possibilities for practice, and an ongoing assessment of the relationship between practice and the effects of practice (Kofman and Senge1993; Goker 2012; Sergiovanni l996).

This type of reflection gives leaders an opportunity to self-evaluate their leading styles and practices (Bolman and Deal 2003; Drath 2001). Leaders grow professionally if they think about the way they lead and what improvements need to be made. The essential goal of reflective analysis is to open the doors for leader inquiry, a leader-driven form of professional growth.

Educational systems throughout the world have recently embraced (at least in principle) an evolution from largely centralized structures to more decentralized ones. The rationale for decentralized schooling, and particularly school-based management (SBM), argues that the school is the primary unit of change; those who work directly with students have the most informed and credible opinions about educational arrangements that will be most beneficial to their students (Gunduz and Goker 2014). Departments at the universities should be considered as the primary unit of change, and department heads as reflective leaders are at the center of changes and should determine their own readiness for change before undertaking the complex process of changing their departments. They can discover their change readiness by becoming reflective practitioners who know themselves and engage in professional learning (Zimmerman 2011). A substantial research literature has demonstrated that reflective leadership can be employed effec-

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tively to improve student and teacher performance (Goker 2005, 2006a, 2012; Brown 1990; Ceperley 1991; Conley and Bacharach 1990).

The leadership practices required of middle administrators, namely department heads, have become more complicatedas universities struggle for their own survival as a result of change (Goker 2015; Tucker 1984). Dramatic increases or decreases in student enrollment at some departments have stimulated concerns for accountability at all levels.

Among the major roles department heads, as middle managers, perform are those which include academic, administrative and leadership responsibilities. Student involvement, teaching, advising, development of curriculum, and encouraging research are a part of their academic duties. Administrative duties include administering the budget, maintaining records, managing support staff and maintaining a linkage with central administration. Leadership roles include reflective tasks as supporting, developing, motivating and evaluating faculty members. McLaughlin (1975) found that the department chairs are most comfortable in the academic role, prefer the administrative role least and obtain the greatest level of satisfaction from the leadership role. McCarthy (1986) and Tucker (1984) discovered that the department chair leadership role is a critical element to the success of academic departments and the basic mission of higher education.

Similar findings were also confirmed by McCarthy (1986) that:

(1) Chairpersons are generally drawn from faculty ranks and assume their position having little or no administrative experience;
(2) Few opportunities for orientation and training are available to them;
(3) Department chairpersons hold a "key" administrative and leadership role as first-line managers that directly affect the success and growth of the department;
(4) Department chairpersons need, want, and deserve pre-service and in-service development in specific areas.

On the other hand, Cunningham (1985) reported that reliance on emergent leadership is not any more enough and suggested that more highly organized and deliberate attempts to develop leadership are needed.

Reflective Process

In the field of higher education, administrators have recently been employing the reflective practice process to develop their leadership abilities. As Edmondson et al. (2001) stated the role of reflective practice has been underlined in the research of professional organizations. The concept of reflective practice was proposed by Schön (1983). This concept was initially applied in the field of teacher education and is increasingly being applied across the other professions (Moon 2004). Raelin (2002) defined reflective practice as the practice of periodically stepping back to consider the meaning of what recently transpired to others and to oneself in our immediate environment. Reflective practice, however, includes not only ex-postfacto reflection, in which one leans back and thinks about the day or the situation at hand, but also in-the-moment reflection, that is, reflection within the immediacy of practice (Yanow 2009). Schön (1983: 241) called the second type, reflection-in-action, which 'consists in on the spot surfacing, criticizing, restructuring, and testing of intuitive understandings of experienced phenomena; often it takes the form of a reflective conversation with the situation'. The reflective practitioner explores other ways of seeing and adopts an attitude of inquiry rather than determining answers based solely on positional authority (Yanow and Tsoukas 2009).

Osterman (1990) emphasizes that reflective practice is a critical assessment of one's own behavior as a means to develop one's own craftsmanship. During the reflective process, self-evaluation is the basic requirement for reflective practice, leadership effectiveness and continued professional growth. Through the use of the self-evaluation and reflections from department heads in this study, middle administrators at the universities can evaluate their leadership practices or behaviors and reflect on opportunities for application. According to Kouzes and Posner (1988a), once given the opportunity for development and feedback, leaders can improve their leadership abilities. Results of this research can be used to identify existing and needed leadership practices and behaviors of middle administrators at the universities.

Goal and Objectives

The primary goal of this study was to evaluate the leadership practices and bahaviors ex-

hibited by the middle level administrators including department heads, supervisors and coordinators in the academic departments at universities in North Cyprus through self-analysis to enable a reflective learning community. The following research objectives guided the study:

(1) To identify leadership practices and behaviors used by middle level administrators (department heads) at universities in North Cyprus.
(2) To identify demographic characteristics of department heads.
(3) To identify and compare the utilization of five leadership practices in terms of selected demographic characteristics of department heads.

Sample and Procedures

The population of the study consisted of all middle level administrators (department heads) in higher education in North Cyprus including department heads, supervisors and coordinators in the academic departments. The population was selected based on the criteria that each department head must have had at least one faculty member (senior lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, or full professor). At the time of this study, the academic year of 2012-2013, there were five Cypriot universities in North Cyprus, two of which were foundation or state funded universities and the other three were private ones. 1 private and 1 foundation university were selected as samples. As a result of the criterion set for this study, 60 department chairs from both social and science departments were eligible for participation.

Instruments and Data Collection

A variety of data sources including surveys, interviews and anecdotal evidence were used to determine the perceptions of the participants. As the main instrument of the study, The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), developed by Kouzes and Posner (1988b) was used to identify leadership practices and behaviors exhibited by department heads in this study. Research study conducted by Kouzes and Posner (1988a) showed that when leaders perform at their best they used the following leadership practices: (1) challenge the process, (2) inspire a shared vision, (3) enable others to act, (4) model the way, and (5) encourage the heart. Face validity of the instrument for this study was determined through an extensive review of the literature regarding leadership practices and behaviors of effective department chairpersons (Mitchell 1987; Seagren 1986; Knight and Holen 1985; Glueck and Thorp 1974).

Department heads were asked to respond to the questions in reference to their own leadership behaviors and they responded to 30 leadership behavior statements,which were grouped to determine a mean score for each of the five leadership practices. A five-point Likert scale was used to respond to each leadership behavior statement: “1”meant the leader “rarely or never” did this; “2” meant the leader did this “once in a while”; “3” meant the leader “sometimes” did this; “4” meant the leader did this “fairly often”; and a response of “5” indicated the leader did this “very frequently or always”.

After this process, demographic questions were asked to identify specific characteristics of each department head and their impact on the use of selected leadership practices. Among the demographic questions were responsibilities for each department head, number of years served as department head, formal leadership trainingreceived (if any), age, job description, and the existence of an orientation program.

The researcher used interviews, open-ended surveys, and anecdotal data (for example, field notes from observation forms, orientation meetings and informal discussions) along with the main instrument (LPI).

Department heads were first contacted by phone and asked for their consensus to participate in the study. 54 of them volunteered and survey instruments were mailed to 54 department heads along with a cover letter explaining thepurpose, methods, confidentiality and the process to participate in the study. After two weeks, follow up contacts by phone and letter were initiated to encourage participation.Two department heads did not participate in the study and one of them could not be reached following several telephone calls and follow up letters. At the end of data collection period, 51 department heads (85%) provided usable returns. 10 of them were also interviewed and asked to share any anecdotal evidence for the sake of confirming the validity of the data.

Data Analysis

For each demographic question, leadership practice and leadership behavior, means, frequencies and standard deviations were computed, and

data was analyzed using the SPSS Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Because data was taken from the total population of department heads, theoretically, there was no need to use inferential statistics in the data analysis.Yet, in specific cases, statistics were used to provide the researcher with a tool to discuss the differences among the population, which can be used to make references to future populations. Best (1989) focused on the importance of generalizing to populations in other times.The statistical procedures thus provided a method to further analyze the data for further information. An alpha level of .05 was set to identify significant differences.Results from participants and late participants were compared; no significant differences were found.

RESULTS

In order to determine the reliability of the LPI instrument, a Cronbach alpha reliability program was used. As shown in Table 1, the reliabilities for each of the five leadership practices were found to be consistent with reliability scores reported as a result of extensive testing and retesting of the instrument by the authors.

For each of the five leadership practices evaluated in this study, means and standard deviations are shown in Table 2. As can be seen, all five leadership practices had means between 3.5 and 4.5, which showed that department heads employed leadership practices "fairly often" in their leadership positions. The leadership practice "enabling others to act" received the highest mean score (4.33), while the leadership practice "inspiring a shared vision" had the lowest mean score (3.69). The standard deviations reported for each of the leadership practices indicated a range of variation among the respondents.

Table 2: Mean score for each leadership practice reported by department heads

Leadership practice	*Mean*	*Department heads SD*
Challenging the process	3.73	.43
Inspiring a shared vision	3.69	.62
Enabling others to act	4.33	.41
Modeling the way	3.82	.51
Encouraging the heart	3.85	.66

Table 3 shows means and standard deviations for each leadership behavior. It is important to remember that the leadership behaviors listed are abbreviated versions of the actual leadership behavior statements used in the LPI instrument (Kouzes and Posner 1988b). The leadership behaviors with the highest mean scores were, "treat others with respect" and "allow others to make decisions".The lowest mean scores were reported on the leadership behaviors "lets others know beliefs/values" and "enlists a common vision". The leadership behaviors determined as used most often included "treats others with respect", "allows others to make decisions", "practices what is espoused", "involves others in planning","stays up-to-date", "gets others to own project", "creates atmosphere of trust", "develops cooperative relationships", "recognizes others' contributions", "gives praise for a job well done", "communicates positive outlook" and "clear on leadership philosophy".

According to the demographic data, fifty-five percent of the department heads surveyed had six or less years of experience. Seventy-five percent of the department heads surveyed had less than ten years of experience (Table 4). Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine significant differences between leadership practices utilized when compared by years of experience as department heads; no significant differences were found. Within the same context, for the variable

Table 1: Reliability coefficients for scales measuring leadership practices of department heads

Scale	*Reliability alpha Kouzes and Posner*	*Reliability alpha this study*
Encouraging the heart	.90	.88
Inspiring a shared vision	.86	.85
Enabling others to act	.88	.84
Modeling the way	.82	.78
Challenging the process	.80	.77

'InternalreliabilitiesreportedbyKouzesandPosner(N=1567)

Table 3: Mean score for each leadership behavior reported by department heads

Leadership behaviors		*Mean*	*SD*
Challenging the Process			
1	Seeks challenges	3.73	.85
6	Stays up-to-date	4.32	.69
11	Challenges the status quo	3.47	.68
16	Looks for ways to innovate	3.85	.73
21	Asks "What can we learn?"	3.47	.79
26	*Experiments and takes risks*	3.45	.88
Inspiring a Shared Vision			
2	Describes future we can create	3.69	.91
7	Shares future dreams	3.48	.98
12	Communicates positive Outlook	4.22	.68
17	Enlists a common vision	3.33	.96
22	Forecasts the future	3.89	.73
27	Contagiously excited about future	3.49	.81
Enabling Others to Act			
3	Involves other in planning	4.33	.69
8	Treats others with respect	4.61	.53
13	Allows others to make decisions	4.32	.56
18	Develops cooperative relationships	4.18	.73
23	Creates atmosphere of trust	4.33	.65
28	Get others to own projects	4.25	.49
Modelling the Way			
4	Clear on leadership phislosophy	3.82	.66
9	Breaks projects into chunks	3.65	.78
14	Assures values are adhered to	3.45	.92
19	Lets others know beliefs/values	3.13	.96
24	Practices what is expoused	4.29	.76
29	Sets clear goals and milestones	3.63	.78
Encouraging the Heart			
5	Celebrates milestones	3.85	.93
10	Recognizes others' contributions	4.03	.84
15	Gives praise for job well done	4.11	.75
20	Finds ways	3.94	.89
25	Gives appreciation/support celebrate	3.53	.92
30	Tells others about group's work	3.65	.77

[a]Abbreviatied version of actual leadership behavior statement provided in the LPI self evaluation instrument (Kouzes and Posner 1988b). Numbers represent items as they appeared on the instrument.

age, six department heads were 30 to 40 years of age, 22 of them were 41 to 50 years old, 18 were 51 to 60 years, and five of them were 61 years of age. Results of a t-test indicated no significant differences between the leadership practices utilized by department heads when grouped by age (above and below 50 years of age).

Apart from these, department heads indicated a broad range of job responsibilities beyond a seventy-six to hundred percent administrative appointment, however, seven did not have a specific percentage of their job allocated to administrative duties. Table 5 shows that the average distribution for department heads in higher education was forty percent of their job responsibility in teaching, eight percent research, seven percent service, four percent extension, thirty-seven percent administration and nearly three percent to other responsibilities (Table 5).

Table 4: Years served as a department executive officer

Number of years served	*Number*	*Percent*
Less than 6 years	28	55
6 to 10 years	10	20
11 to 15 years	5	10
16 years and over	8	15
Total	51	100.0

Mean= 7.89

In the same way, no significant differences between the percent of teaching responsibilities of department heads and their utilization of four of five leadership practices were found. However, department heads with job responsibilities consisting of greater than twenty-five percent teaching responsibility had a significantly lower level of utilization of the leadership practice "inspiring

Table 5: Job responsibilities assumed by department heads

Total percentage	*Teaching*	*Research*	*Service*	*Extension*	*Admits*	*Other*
76-100	4	0	0	0	5	0
51-75	9	0	1	0	7	1
26-50	18	2	1	2	16	0
1-25	14	23	20	11	13	7
0	6	26	29	38	10	43
Total	51	51	51	51	51	51
Average	40.1%	8.4%	7.1%	4.4%	37.5%	2.6%

administration. Only five department heads held a shared vision" than those who had twenty five percent or less teaching responsibility.

As illustrated by the requirements for selection to the study, department heads are school leaders and must have served as successful faculty members, so the faculty members noted their professional behaviors. In the open-ended survey responses, the department heads indicated overwhelmingly that they were ''more professional'' and had ''higher expectations'' than their faculty members. One department head explained the difference: "I believe that the support I received from my faculty members was excellent. They were very open in discussing academic problems. They were professional and supportive as well." On the open-ended question survey, the department heads overwhelmingly recognized professionalism and professional leadership as a quality of their faculty members. Regarding shared vision and goals, a department head explained: "Faculty members were helpful on coming to see me any time I asked for". One department head interviewed explained this: "I felt that their input on teaching style and methodology was positive."

When leadership practices utilized are compared with the percent of job responsibility allocated to administration, results of at-test showed significant differences. Department heads who have more than twenty-five percent of their job responsibility dedicated to administration had significantly higher mean scores on the leadership practices "inspiring a shared vision"and "encouraging the heart"than those withless than twenty-five percent of their job responsibilities allocated to administration.

It is also understood from the data that forty percent of the department heads indicated they had not received any formal leadership training during their administrative post. Thirty-five percent of the department heads had completed a faculty course in leadership and forty-seven percent had attended advanced leadership workshops. In an analysis of leadership practices utilized by department heads and leadership coursework completed, department heads who had completed a course in leadership had a significantly higher level of utilization of the leadership practice "enabling others to act" when compared to responses from those who had not completed a course. It was determined that those who had completed a leadership course had a significantly higher level of utilization of the leadership practice "encouraging the heart" than those who had not completed a course.

DISCUSSION

According to data gained for the mean score identified for each of the five leadership practices evaluated in this study, it is clearly seen that department heads at the universities use the leadership practices "fairly often" in departmental leadership. Yet one leadership practice "enabling others to act" had a mean approaching the "very frequently" range of utilization. This result correlates with the research conducted by Kouzes and Posner (1988a) in that trust in the leaders is of paramount importance if other people are going to follow that person overtime. In other words, trust is developed through consistency in behavior. On the other hand, standard deviations suggested a lack of consistency regarding the utilization of specific leadership practices in departmental leadership, which implies that department heads in higher education should seek additional feedback from their peers and subordinates about their utilization of certain leadership practices in their departmental and professional positions.

Within this context, reflective practice or leadership can be used an effective tool to give and get feedback. Reflection is concerned with the process or means by which people make sense and reconstruct the meaning of what has been planned, observed, or achieved in practice. So, it is essential to learning to convert tacit experience into explicit knowledge, leading to an understanding of experiences that may have been overlooked in practice, allowing us to critique our taken for granted assumptions, and encouraging us to be receptive to alternative ways of reasoning and behaving (Bolman and Deal 2003; Cunliffe 2009; DeFillippi 2001; Gray 2007; Goker 2015; Ramsey 2011; Xing and Sims 2012; Yip and Raelin 2011).

Department heads should seek out additional feedback and information about benefits and methods of developing specific leadership behaviors. Leaders play important roles in the promotion of collective reflection in the workplace. Cunliffe (2009) examined leadership in terms of the philosophical themes of relationalism, ethics, and reflexivity. She proposed the idea of a 'philosopher leader', who encourages organizational members to think more critically and reflexively about themselves, their actions, and the situations they find themselves in. This is one leadership style that also facilitates workplace learning (Gunduz and Goker 2014; Eshraghi et al. 2011).

Results of this study showed no significant difference in leadership practices used when department heads were grouped by age and years of department head experience. Based on these results, current department heads at the universities are promising and couldeasily be the leaders of the profession for the next decades and could benefit from specific training to develop or enhance leadership skills in specific areas.

Department heads who completed leadership training indicated higher levels of utilization of certain leadership practices when compared to responses from those who had not completed training. Information about leadership practices of successful leaders is more available now than it was ten years ago (Kouzes and Posner1988a). Department heads should seek out information and opportunities to improve their leadership abilities. Kouzes and Posner (1988a) concluded that effective leaders are constantly looking for ways to improve themselves and their departments.

Another striking result in this study is that the majority of department heads did not have specific leadership and administrative duties identified in their job descriptions. Martin (1986), York (1984) and Morgan (1984) determined alackof congruity between the perceptions of the deans and department executive officers in regard to multiple roles, which results in high stress levels and role ambiguity. According to Martin, role ambiguity is problematic to effective leadership because the goals of the person leading are at odds with the expectations and perceptions of those being managed. Department heads, deans and faculty member should cooperatively evaluate basic leadership and administrative responsibilities in the job description of department heads.

Eighty-three percent of the department heads indicated that they did not receive a quality orientation program regarding the roles and responsibilities of their new position.This finding correlates with that of research conducted by Brann and Emmet (1972) that most of the department executive officers are provided policy manuals and given instructions to call if they have any questions. Department staff and existing administrators should preparea quality orientation program for new head of departments to improve initial working relationships and reduce some of the ambiguity encountered in the early stages of a new position.

Regarding the ambiguity in the job description, a department head explained: "Faculty members were highly motivated and they knew what to do". One department head interviewed explained this: "I felt that there was no need for a department head because my staff were workaholic and highly motivated and their contribution to my position was positive." The findings obtained are also consistent with the results of the studies, which have determined the relationship between workaholism and motivation for work (Nijhuis et al. 2012; Stoeber et al. 2013), workaholism and work engagement (Gorgievski et al. 2014).

CONCLUSION

Results gained from this study clearly reveal that department heads at the universities use the leadership practices "fairly often" in departmental leadership. Overall data about leadership behaviors provided insight on which department

heads can make use of what practices to improve their overall leadership effectiveness. For the leadership practice "Inspiring a shared vision", and the leadership behavior "enlists a common vision" received the lowest mean score of all leadership behaviors. This finding showed that department heads do not view themselves as practicing this leadership behavior very often. In other words, they should review individual leadership behaviors to identify behaviors to be improved.

As to the job responsibilities identified by the department heads, abroad range of duties beyond administration and leadership were included. Only five department heads indicated a sole administrative appointment whereas many of them had primary responsibility in teaching.It means that if department heads are dedicating most of their time to teaching and research, they may not have enough time to implement the necessary leadership practices needed to move their departments beyond maintenance. Thus, department heads must have a specific amount of their job time allocated to specific leadership responsibilities, which also means that they should also have low teaching loads and more time allocated to fulfill their leadership responsibilities such as inspiring vision and recognizing, supporting and motivating faculty.

It is also clearly seen that the results of this study are applicable to leadership training programs worldwide. On the whole, universities should analyze ways to improve the role of the department heads. All leadership training programs should ensure that university department heads have time in their schedules to discuss important issues and collaborate with the faculty members.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations for additional reserach are submitted for consideration. Further studies should be carried out to identify peer and subordinate perceptions concerning leadership practices and behaviors used by department heads. On the other hand, specific and reflective leadership needs of department heads should be identified in order to prioritize further training and development. Moreover, research studies should be carried out to identify specific leadership and administrative responsibilities identified in current job descriptions, and recommendations should be made for areas of improvement especially in reflective practice. Because encouraging reflective practice plays a central role in facilitating leading for learning, unit missions and role modeling in combination can be used to promote reflective practice in the workplace. Continued research on power relationships using qualitative methods should be carried out to advance understanding of leadership of learning.

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