

ORIGINAL ARTICLE**Department Heads' Self-Perception of their Leadership Styles at Jimma University, Ethiopia****Gemechis File* and Ayalew Shibeshi******Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the self-perception of department heads about their own leadership styles at Jimma University. The study employed descriptive survey method and used quantitative approach. Department heads were source of data. Using availability sampling technique, all 51 department heads in the university were included in the study. Accordingly, LEAD-Self instrument and Demographic Variables Survey questionnaires were employed to collect data. The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics and finally examined using relevant literature. The result of this study showed that department heads perceived the leadership style 'selling' as their own predominant and 'participating' as their secondary leadership style. The study further revealed that the perception of department heads did not significantly vary across demographic variables such as work experience, level of education and disciplinary background. Finally, the researchers recommended that department heads, as leaders; need to vary their leadership style in order to fit into the situations. Specially, in higher education institutions, where majority of the teaching staff hold post graduate degree, delegative leadership style seems to be appropriate and department heads, therefore, need to exercise such kind of leadership style as needed. Moreover, the university is advised to arrange continuous and relevant training for department heads to make them capable of varying their leadership styles to fit into situations. In addition, since leadership

styles can vary across situations and time, further research needs to be conducted if there may be differences in the leadership styles of department heads longitudinally.

* College of Natural Science Jimma University, E-mail: gammeef@yahoo.com; and

** College of Education and Behavioral Studies, Addis Ababa University, e-mail: ayalewshibeshi@yahoo.com respectively

Introduction

In this changing and challenging world, where knowledge based economy is craving more intellectual property, higher education plays a paramount role. The significance of higher education for the development of any nation, developed and developing, was clearly spelt out in the large body of literature. According to Teshome (2005), higher education is crucial for the production of vital human resources, such as teachers, healthcare professionals, lawyers, engineers, managers, businessmen and researchers which are critical for socio-economic development of a nation. Moreover, he described higher education as a center for knowledge and skills creation, adaptation and dissemination. Likewise, Santiago et al (2008) stated that there are at least four broad ways in which tertiary education contributes to the use of knowledge in both economic and social life: the building of knowledge bases (primarily through research); the creation of capabilities (through teaching and research training); the diffusion of knowledge (through interactions with knowledge users); and the maintenance of knowledge (inter-generational storage and transmission of knowledge through codification, libraries, databases, etc). Higher education, therefore, plays multiple roles especially in the transition toward a knowledge based economy by providing the human resources required for leadership, management, business and professional positions that are important for the development of the country.

To take the advantage of higher education, Ethiopia has embarked on higher education expansion and reform program of impressive dimensions following the adoption of the Education and Training Policy (TGE, 1994), that help in bringing about economic

growth and lead to poverty reduction. With rapid expansion, the policy designed to raise the country's insignificant tertiary enrollment ratio to more respectable level is producing results (Teshome, 2006). At present, the country has twenty-three universities, many of which were opened from scratch four or five years ago.

More than ever before, universities, as they attempt to meet the human resource demands from various sectors (industries, education etc), are currently facing multiple challenges from different perspectives as well as continual environmental change. Budget constraints, changing student customers, emergence of new teaching and learning approaches, diversity concerns, assessment, accountability and dramatic technological changes are some of the many challenges facing higher education today. At the same time, universities have been asked to reexamine their roles in nation-building. In this context, effective leadership is a key issue. Effective leadership plays a vital role in leading universities through change as this

often involves ambiguity, uncertainty and risks.

Universities are complex organizations. They have goals, hierarchical systems and structures, officials that carryout specified duties and responsibilities, leadership, and routine bureaucratic administration for handling day-to-day work. To achieve their missions and goals, it is imperative for universities to have effective leadership that function at different levels. To put it briefly, leadership is one of the major factors affecting university's performance. With regard to this, Bitzer and Koen (2010) succinctly put that effective

academic leadership can be viewed as being the biggest advantage a university can have in a resource-hungry competitive higher education environment. Similarly, Al-Omari et al (2008) revealed that leaders are one of the crucial factors who have responsibility for and form success or failure of organization. In addition, leaders are the key to lead subordinates to perform in order to achieve organizational goals.

The academic department is the base unit of universities and colleges. It provides a useful structure for the day-to-day activities that shape faculty members' attitudes, behaviors and performances. In line with this, Lucas (2000a) stated that within institutions of higher education, change efforts that directly impact students' educational experiences occur at the department level. The same author also stated that changes in disciplinary focus, curriculum, research emphases, and teaching quality and student-faculty relationships are just a few of the changes that occur as a result of efforts led by department chairs. Department chairs make approximately 80% of all decisions on college campuses and are primarily responsible for both the budgeting and planning activities of the

academic enterprise (Dyer and Miller, 1999; Knight and Holen, 1985). Therefore, the academic department chair position is one of the most important positions in academe and vital to the operation of higher education institutions.

Of course, a diversified body of literature witnessed that there are various leadership styles such as Democratic, Autocratic, Participative and Laissez-faire that leaders can exercise in different situations so as to influence their employee with the

ultimate aim of maximizing organizational performance. According to Dull (1981), since leadership is a dynamic process, a leader should always be astute enough to use the right style of leadership. Moreover, Situational Leadership Theory speculates that the developmental levels of a leader's subordinates play the greatest role in determining which leadership styles (leader behaviors) are most appropriate. The theory is based on the amount of direction (task behavior) and socio-emotional support (relationship behavior) a leader must provide given the situation and the "level of maturity" of the followers (Bolden, et al, 2003). This shows that there is no single leadership style that is effective in all situations; a leadership style effective in one situation may be ineffective in other situation. With regard to this the Tri-dimensional Leader Effectiveness Model of Hersey and Blanchard, (1982) comprises of a Relationship Behavior Axis, a Task Behavior Axis, and the Effectiveness Dimension Axis. Accordingly, these axes or grids form four quadrants of leadership styles: telling, selling, participating and delegating.

Telling style (S₁) which is characterized by high task and low

relationship behavior and is best suited for followers of low maturity. The leader who employs this style habitually makes his/her own decisions and announces them to his/her subordinates expecting them to carry them out without question.

Selling style (S₂) which is characterized by high task and high relationship behavior and is best suited for followers of low to

moderate maturity. The leader using this approach also makes his/her own decisions but, rather than simply announcing them to his subordinates, he/she tries to persuade his/her subordinates to accept them. The leader accepts the possibility that the follower may resist the decision; therefore, the leader persuades the followers to accept his/her decision.

Participating Style (S₃) This is characterized by high relationship and low task behavior and is best suited for followers of moderate to high maturity. The leader using this style does not make the decision until the problem is presented to members of his group and their advice and suggestions are received. The decision is still the leaders but it is not taken until the staffs are consulted.

Delegating Style (S₄) this is characterized by low relationship and low task behavior and is best suited for followers of high maturity. This approach to leadership involves delegating to the subordinates the right to make decisions. The leader's function is to define the problem and indicate limits within which the decision must be made. The selection of an appropriate leadership style is determined by the maturity of the followers, which ranges from immature to mature.

Thus, the central point of Situational leadership model is that effective leader needs to select and employ leadership styles (telling, selling, participating and delegating) that matches the situation (followers maturity level to complete a specific task) to maximize the performance. Owing to this, the researchers focused on the situational leadership styles

mentioned above to analyze the results of the findings.

Department heads, as leaders should, therefore, be aware of the specific situation in which they give direction so that they can employ leadership style that fits into the context. Having this in mind, this article aims to assess the leadership styles of department heads at Jimma University.

Statement of the Problem

In today's world of knowledge based economy, universities are recognized as major actors in economic development and growth. In order to play their role successfully, they need to have an effective academic leadership. This involves the higher, middle and lower level leaders. University leaders, especially department heads, have the potential to direct members of a particular culture toward change. In countries like Ethiopia, where higher education institutions are expected to address the multifaceted societal problems, it is increasingly important to study the leadership styles of the institutions, in general, and their department heads' in particular, as these factors are major determinants of success in achieving goals.

The large body of literature existing on leadership is mainly the experience of Western countries. Comparatively, fewer or no researches on leadership have been undertaken in the context of higher education institutions in developing countries like Ethiopia. Similarly, Gmelch (2002a) indicated

that even though department chairs have a significant impact on higher education's current and future state, they may be the least studied and most misunderstood management position anywhere in the world. Hence, there is lack of knowledge on the leadership styles of academic leaders in the

university, in general, and department heads, in particular. According to Vroom (1984), there is paucity of research on leadership in higher education. In particular, there has been little publication about academic department heads in higher education (Gmelch, 2002a). Moreover, improving effectiveness of institutional governance, leadership and management system is identified as one of the strategic issue of the University under consideration (Jimma University, 2007).

Despite the universal acceptance of the fact that the success of university rested partly on academic leadership of the university at different levels, there is to the best of the researchers' knowledge-no empirically designed systematic study on leadership styles of department heads of universities in Ethiopia, in general, and in Jimma University, in particular. Therefore, this study was designed to assess the leadership styles of department heads at Jimma University with the following major basic questions:

1. How do department heads perceive their leadership styles?
2. Is there statistically significant difference between any of the demographic variables (qualification, discipline and experience) and the leadership styles of department heads?

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to assess the leadership styles of department heads in Jimma University. To this end, the study was aimed at:

- identifying the perceived leadership styles of department heads;
- determining whether there is a difference in perceived leadership styles of department heads according to their level of

education/qualification, experience and discipline or not; and

- forwarding future implication on leadership styles of department heads.

Significance of the Study

This study aimed at assessing leadership styles of department heads in Jimma University. It was, thus hoped that it would:

- provide valuable information for the concerned bodies such as department heads themselves, deans, directors, presidents, etc about the leadership styles of department heads of the university under consideration.
- serve as stepping stone for governmental and non governmental bodies that may be interested in improving the proper functioning of leadership in higher education institutions in Ethiopia.
- serve as a spring board for those researchers who are interested to study leadership styles in higher education institutions.
- also assist higher academic leaders to acquire awareness of their own leadership styles as a step toward becoming effective academic professional leaders.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were operationalized for this study.

Leadership Style: The behavior pattern a person exhibits when attempting to influence the activities of others (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, (1996).

Predominant Style: The behavior pattern used most often when attempting to influence the activities of others. In other words, most leaders tend to have a favorite leadership style (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982).

Secondary Style: The leadership style that person tends to use on occasions (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982).

Task Behavior: The extent to which a leader engages in one-way communication by explaining what each follower is to do as well as when, where and how tasks are to be accomplished (Hersey and Blanchard, 1976)

Relationship Behavior: The extent to which a leader engages in two-way communication by providing socio-emotional support, "psychological strokes," and facilitating behaviors (Hersey and Blanchard, 1976).

Readiness: Readiness in Situational Leadership is defined as the extent to which a follower demonstrates the ability and willingness to accomplish a specific task (Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 1996).

Department Head: The officially designated leader of an academic department in a college or university. According to Leaming (1998), department chairpersons serve as chief administrators for the department and represent the interests of the department to upper administration, to the dean, and to their faculty and students.

Research Method

Research Design

This study was quantitative research and aimed at assessing leadership styles of department heads at Jimma University based on their own perception. In addition, the study aimed at describing the leadership styles of the department heads in relation to demographic variables (experience, qualification and discipline). In order to reduce the raw data obtained to a more meaningful form and identify the current leadership styles of department heads, a descriptive survey method was employed.

Data Sources

Sources of data for this study were department heads in the university under consideration. Accordingly, all department heads in the six colleges and one institute participated in this study.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The university has six colleges and one institute, namely College of Public Health and Medical Sciences, Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, Business and Economics, Social Science and Law, Natural Sciences, Technology and Engineering and Institute of Education and Professional Development Studies. Accordingly, except the College of Business and Economics, all department heads in the rest of five colleges and one institute were included in the study. The College of Business and Economics, which had only four departments, was excluded because it was used for pilot testing of the instrument.

There are 51 Departments in the five colleges and one Institute. Accordingly, Colleges of Public Health and Medical Sciences, Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, Social Sciences and Law, Engineering and Technology, Natural

Sciences and Institute of Education and Professional Development Studies have 20, 6, 10, 8, 6 and 1 Departments respectively and all of them were included in the study. Accordingly, using availability sampling technique all of 51 Department heads were included in this study.

Data Collection Tools and Procedures

Data was collected using the Leadership Effectiveness and Adaptability Description (LEAD)-Self instrument which was developed by the Center for Leadership Studies to assess the leadership styles proposed by Hersey and Blanchard: telling/directing (high task, low relationship), selling/coaching (high task, high relationship), participating/supportive (low task, high relationship) and delegating (low task, low relationship) (Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson, 1996). This instrument was, therefore,

used in this study to assess leadership styles displayed by department heads perception.

In addition to the LEAD-Self, a Demographic Survey Instrument called the Personal Information Data Sheet was also included in the survey packet to collect information relating to the subject's sex, years of service in current position, qualification, disciplinary area, and name of the college the subjects of the study is working in.

The LEAD- Instruments consists of 12 management situations and four possible leadership style responses for each: 1) a high task–low relationship behavior; 2) a high task–high relationship behavior; 3) a high relationship–low task behavior; and 4) a low relationship–low task behavior. The respondents were expected to select the answer that most closely matches how they think they would typically respond in a given situation.

Scores in four quadrants of the situational leadership model indicate style: quadrant 1 (S_1), high task and low relationship behavior; quadrant 2 (S_2), high task and high relationship behavior; quadrant 3 (S_3), high relationship and low task behavior; and quadrant 4 (S_4), low relationship and low task behavior. The predominant leadership style of a respondent defines as the quadrant with the most responses on the LEAD-Self instrument. A respondent's secondary/supporting style (or styles) defines as a style they might apply on occasion.

The reliability of the instrument was maintained in such a way that it was pilot tested on college of Business and economics before it was employed for the actual data collection purpose. The entire four department heads in the college were included in the pilot test. Accordingly, the coefficients of reliability of items measuring all variables are found to be Cronbach's alpha, $\alpha = 0.70$. According to Gay

(1980), if reliability coefficient, $\alpha \geq 0.50$, then, it can be accepted as reliable instrument. The items were, therefore, found to have good ground to be used in gathering the relevant data for the study.

To maintain the validity, the researchers tried to consult relevant literatures so as to adapt the items for this specific survey. Moreover, to maintain the validity, a comment of the department heads at which the pilot study was carried out (expert review) was incorporated during modification of the instrument. The questionnaires were administered to all 51 department heads and 44 (86.3%) were completed, returned and employed for the purpose of the study.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained through LEAD-questionnaire was analyzed using statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 16.0. It involved the application of both the descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive tests such as simple frequency and cross tabulation were used to investigate the predominantly perceived leadership style of department heads. Moreover, mean rank and other non parametric tests such as Chi-square, Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests were computed to test whether there is statistically significant difference or not among the perception of the leadership styles of department heads across various disciplines, experience and level of education in the university under consideration.

With regard to the classification for the administrative experiences of department heads, literatures recommend a minimum length of term of office three years (Fullan, 1992; Higher Education System Overhaul [HESO], 2004). Accordingly, the researchers also categorized the experience of department heads on the current position as administration experience of 0–3 years and more than 3 years.

Moreover, in the analysis of the data the disciplines were categorized using Biglan's classification. As cited in Gorsky et al (2010), Biglan (1973)

classified disciplines into four categories. To each category, he associated disciplines and described the nature of their subject-matter as follows:

Pure Hard (Exact and natural Cumulative, atomistic (crystalline/treelike), concerned with universals, quantities, simplification, resulting in discovery/explanation.

Pure Soft (Humanities and social sciences) characterized by Reiterative, holistic, organic, concerned with particulars, qualities, complication, resulting in understanding/interpretation.

Applied Hard (Science based professions) characterized by Pragmatic (know-how via hard knowledge), concerned with mastery of physical environment, resulting in products/techniques.

Applied Soft (Social science based professions) characterized by Functional, utilitarian (know-how via soft knowledge), concerned with enhancement of professional practice, resulting in protocols/procedures. Accordingly, so as to facilitate the analysis and interpretation of the data the researchers classified the disciplines in the university under consideration as summarized in table 1 below.

Table 1: Classification of Disciplines in the University Based on Biglan's Category of Disciplines

Classifications	Discipline groups
Pure Hard	Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, Statistics
Pure Soft	Governance, Psychology, Sociology, History, English, Afan Oromo, Amharic, Geography and Oromo Folklore
Applied Hard	Clinical Departments Such as Internal Medicine, Ophthalmology, Pediatrics, Radiology, Anesthesia Gynecology and Obstetrics ; Veterinary Medicine, Pharmacy, Medical Laboratory, Horticulture, Animal Science, Engineering, and Technology Disciplines
Applied Soft	Educational Planning and Management, Health and Physical Education, Allied Health Disciplines such as Nursing, Environmental Health, Health Education, Population and Family Health and Epidemiology, Agricultural Economics, Law, Post Harvest Management, Natural Resource Management

Furthermore, before starting the analysis, the researchers codified the quantitative data obtained so as to facilitate its organization, retrieval and interpretation.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section describes the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The demographic data covers sex, department heads' experience in administrative position, current educational level and their disciplinary areas. The majority of the department heads [41(93.2%)] involved in the study were males. The low number of Female Department Heads [3(6.8%)] is not surprising for the reason that there is intolerable gender gap in the university under consideration. As far as experience of the respondents on

the administration position is concerned, 23(52.3%) of the respondents had an administrative work experience of more than three years where as 21(47.7%) of the responding department heads had the administrative work experiences of 0-3 years. With regard to level of education, majority of the respondents [38(86.4%)] hold Masters Degree and only 1(2.3%) of the department heads hold Bachelor Degree. This of course, is because unless there is a special reason, Master's degree is a minimum requirement to be assigned as Department Head in the university under consideration.

Similarly almost half of the responding department heads [21(47.7%)] had the background of applied hard disciplines. That is, majority of them had the background of science based professions such as engineering, agriculture and health sciences.

Table 2: Department Heads' Self-Perception of their Leadership Styles

	Percentage of Respondents' Perception per Quadrant				Total
	S1	S2	S3	S4	
Frequency (N)	4	29	11	0	44
Percent	9.1	65.9	25.0	.0	100.0

Note: S1 = Telling, S2 = Selling, S3 = Participating and S4 = Delegating

Table 2 shows that majority of the department heads in this study were perceived selling [29(65.9%)] as the predominant and participating [11(25.0%)] as secondary leadership styles of their own. That is, the department heads saw themselves as

frequently using a predominant style of selling (S2) and they perceived themselves as occasionally using a supportive leadership style of participating (S3). The table also indicates that these department heads perceived themselves very rarely using a telling style (S1) and totally not using the leadership style delegating (S4).

Table 3: Department Heads' Self-Perception of their Leadership Styles according to their Administrative Experience

Administrative Experience	N	Percentage of Responses per Quadrant			
		S1	S2	S3	S4
0-3	21	(2)9.5	(14)66.7	(5)23.8	(0).0
Above 3	23	(2)8.7	(15)65.2	(6)26.1	(0).0
Total	44	(4)9.1	(29)65.9	(11)25.0	(0).0

Table 3 indicated that the predominantly perceived leadership style for 14(66.5%) department heads having administrative experience of 3 years and below was selling whereas the secondary perceived leadership style of 5(23.8%) was participating. The same table shows that the predominantly and secondary perceived leadership style for 15(65.2%) department heads having administrative

experience of above three years was also selling whereas for 6(26.1 %) was participating respectively. Furthermore, the table discloses that delegating leadership style was not perceived in both categories. No change in perception of leadership style was observed as the length of administrative experience increases.

Table 4: Mann-Whitney Test on Department Heads Self- Perception of their Leadership Styles according to their Administrative Experience

Administrative experience in years	N	Mean	Z	P
0-3	21	22.19	-.183	.855
Above 3	23	22.78		
Total	44			

Table 4 shows that there is no statistically significant difference ($Z = -$

$1.83, P > 0.05$) among department heads having different years of administrative

experience regarding their own leadership style. This means that department heads perceived their own leadership style more or less in a similar way regardless of difference in length of their work experience in their current position. The two category of respondents perceived that their predominant leadership style was selling.

Table 5: Department Heads' Self- Perception of their Leadership Styles according to their Level of Education

Qualification	N	Percentage Of Responses Per Quadrant			
		S1	S2	S3	S4
Bachelor	1	(0)0.0	(1)100.0	(0)0.0	(0)0.0
Masters	38	(3)7.9	(24)63.2	(11)28.9	(0)0.0
Doctoral	5	(1)20.0	(4)80.0	(0)0.0	(0)0.0
Total	44	(4)9.1	(29)65.9	(11)25.0	(0)0.0

Table 5 points out that department heads having Bachelor Degree perceived their predominant leadership style as selling. The table also shows that department heads having Masters Degree qualification also perceived their predominant leadership style as selling [24(63%)] followed by participating leadership style [11(28.9%)]. This indicates that Master Degree holding department heads occasionally exercise

participative leadership style and rarely employ telling leadership style. Doctoral Degree holders also perceived that their predominant leadership style was selling [4(80%)] followed by telling [1(20%)]. From this result, it is also possible to observe that there is no shift in perception of respondents' predominant leadership style across different level of education.

Table 6: Kruskal-Wallis Test on Self-Perception of Department Heads Leadership Style according to their Level of Education

Qualification	N	Mean	X ²	df	P
Bachelor	1	19.00	2.44	2	.296
Masters	38	23.49			
Doctoral	5	15.70			
Total	44				

Table 6 depicts that there is no statistically significant difference ($X^2 = 2.44$, $P > 0.05$) among department heads having different level of education regarding their perception about their

leadership style. This means that level of education does not affect department heads perception about their leadership style. They all perceived that their leadership style is predominantly selling

Table 7: Department Heads' Self-Perception of their Leadership Styles according to their Discipline

Category of Disciplines	N	Percentage of Responses per Quadrant			
		S1	S2	S3	S4
Pure Hard	5	(0)0.0	(3)60.0	(2)40.0	(0)0.0
Pure Soft	8	(0)0.0	(7)87.5	(1)12.5	(0)0.0
Applied Hard	21	(2)9.5	(13)61.9	(6)28.6	(0)0.0
Applied Soft	10	(2)20.0	(6)60.0	(2)20.0	(0)0.0
Total	44	(4)9.1	(29)65.9	(11)25.0	(0)0.0

Table 7 discloses that department heads in pure hard discipline category thought that their predominant leadership style was selling [3(60%)] and participating leadership style was secondary [2(40%)]. This means, though the predominantly perceived leadership style was selling, department heads in this category occasionally exercise participative leadership. Delegating leadership style of leadership was not perceived in this category. As far as department heads in pure soft discipline category are concerned, the predominantly perceived leadership style was selling [7(87%)] followed by participative [1(12%)]. Department heads in applied hard

category also thought that their predominant leadership style was selling [13(61.9%)] followed by participating [6(28%)]. Selling leadership style [6(60%)] was predominantly perceived by department heads in applied soft category; and participating [2(20%)] and telling [2(20%)] were perceived as secondary. The table further shows that no significant change in perception of their leadership style was observed across different categories of disciplines. On top of that, it is also possible to observe that no delegating leadership style was observed in all categories of disciplines.

Table 8: Kruskal-Wallis Test on Self-Perception and Instructors' Perception of Leadership Styles of Department Heads according to their Discipline

Disciplines	N	Mean	X^2	df	P
Pure Hard	5	27.00	1.70	3	.636
Pure Soft	8	21.50			
Applied Hard	21	23.14			
Applied Soft	10	19.70			
Total	44				

Table 8 reveals that there is no statistically significant difference ($X^2 = 1.7$, $P > 0.05$) among department heads from different disciplines regarding their perception about their own leadership style. This means that discipline does not affect department heads' perception about their own leadership style. They all perceived that their leadership style was predominantly selling.

Discussion

The result of this study revealed that department heads perceived that their predominant leadership style was selling. This finding is in line with the finding of Al-omari et al (2008) who investigated the leadership style of department heads and deans and found that the predominantly perceived leadership style was selling. Furthermore, the finding of this study was also in line with the finding of Al-Omari (2007) who explored that the predominant leadership style of department heads and deans in Jordan universities was selling. This leadership style is differentiated by above average amounts of both tasks and relationship behavior. The task behavior is suitable because people are still considered unable but, because they are trying, it is important to be supportive of their motivation and commitment. The leader sets up and maintains two-way communication and provides sufficient

support and re-enforcement so that followers would psychologically accept the leader's decision (Hersey et al., 1996). When the follower can do the job, at least to some extent and perhaps is over-confident about their ability in this, then 'telling' them what to do may demotivate them or lead to resistance. The leader, thus, needs to 'sell' another way of working, explaining and clarifying decisions. The leader also needs to spend time in listening and advising and, where appropriate, helping the follower to gain necessary skills through coaching methods.

The finding of this study also revealed that participative leadership style is the secondary leadership style of department heads as perceived by themselves. This means that department heads occasionally exercise participative leadership style in addition to the predominant one, i.e. selling. This finding is in line with Al-omari et al (2008) and Al-Omari (2007) who asserted that the secondary leadership style of most academic leaders were participative. This leadership style is a style that involves all members of a team in identifying essential goals and developing procedures or strategies for

reaching those goals. From this perspective, participative leadership can

be seen as a leadership style that relies heavily on the leader functioning as a facilitator rather than simply issuing orders or making assignments. This leadership style is characterized by above average amounts of relation behavior and below- average amounts of task behavior. The decision making procedure being shared by both the leader and follower demonstrates this style. The leader maintains the role of confidence in the aptitude of his followers (Hersey et al. 1996). Participative leadership involves consulting with subordinates and the evaluation of their opinions and suggestions before the manager makes the decision (Mullins, 2005). Participative leadership is associated with consensus, consultation, delegation and involvement (Bass 1981). Results revealed that employees who perceive their leaders as adopting consultative or participative leadership behavior were more committed to their organizations, more satisfied with their jobs and higher in their performance (Yousef, 2000). Because of the consultative nature of participative leadership, it has the potential to enhance the dissemination of organizational and managerial values to employees. Employees who work for a participative leader tend to exhibit greater involvement, commitment, and loyalty than employees who work under a directive leader (Bass, 1981). Consequently, employees who are allowed to participate in the decision-making process are likely to be more committed to those decisions. Therefore, management must allowed employees to participate in the decision-making process. Participative leader's ability to raise the commitment, involvement and loyalty among employees should be attractive to a manager wishing to promulgate his or her commitment to provide service quality to employees.

The result also shows that delegative leadership style was not totally perceived by all department heads. This style is described by below-average amounts of

both relationship and task behavior. The followers are allowed to take charge and decide for themselves what, how, when and where to do various tasks. The leader shows complete confidence in his followers' aptitudes and decisions (Hersey and Blanchard, 1996). In higher education institutions where majority of the teaching staff is highly skilled it seems that it is appropriate to put into effect such kind of leadership style as needed.

The finding of this study also showed that demographic variables seem not to affect department heads' perception about their own leadership style.

The result of this study showed that there is no significant difference between department heads having different work experience in their current position regarding their perception about their own leadership style. This result seems to be in contrast with some of the findings of the previous studies. For instance, Katz (1982) argued that the longer an executive is at an organization, the more pronounced his or her leadership style becomes. Allen and Cohen (1969) also found that background and work experiences in an organization shape the ways that people process information and eventually their leadership style. Katz (1982) further explained that those managers are likely to depend increasingly on their past experiences and routine information sources rather than on new information with growing organizational experience. Viljoen's (1987) also argued that people with an increased amount of working experience usually fall in the older age group bracket. From this study, it could be deduced that people within this category were from the old school of thought where autocracy was dominant.

However, there is no evidence in this research that shows work experience affects leaders' leadership style.

According to Kathawala (2001) (cited in Govindsamy, 2006) the banking sector in New York City was the first to make real commitment to masters of business administration (MBA) recruiting with the assumption that the most successful leaders were those who completed post graduate programs. The result of some studies also showed that level of education is an important factor that may affect an executive leadership. Swinyard and Bond (1980) conducted a study of executives and found that subjects with a masters of business administration (MBA) degree got their executive positions at a younger age (44 years old) than those without MBAs (47) and new executives through this period increasingly relied more heavily on human capital as evidenced by increasing educational levels and greater reliance on a specialized graduate degree. This implies that leaders' level of education may affect their leadership style (Keiser, 2004). However, there was no sufficient evidence in the finding of this study to argue that leaders' level of education affects their leadership style. The finding of this study revealed that there was no significant difference between department heads having different level of education regarding their perception about their own leadership style.

Because deans and department heads were typically drawn directly from faculty ranks in each academic discipline, their behaviors in the new administrative roles vary according to the expected norms of their respective fields (Smart and Elton, 1976). Similarly, Neuman and Borris (1978) found that leadership styles of department chairs have been found to be varying by their discipline. Furthermore, Wolverson et al (2001)

argued that academic discipline has a potential influence on the leadership style

of academic deans and department heads. In contrast to these, the finding of this study showed that disciplinary background did not have any effect on

department heads' perception about their own leadership style.

Many leadership practitioners and scholars like Bass, (1985) and Kreiner, (1999) have proposed that followers need leadership to inspire them and enable them to enact revolutionary change in today's organizations. Situational Leadership Style is intuitively appealing and popular with practicing managers in such areas as business, research and development, communications, project management, health care and education (Yukl, 1989).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

The predominant leadership style of department heads was selling. This means that the department heads spend time listening and advising and, where appropriate, helping the follower to gain necessary skills through coaching methods.

The secondary leadership style of department head was participating. This means that department heads occasionally exercise this leadership style in addition to the predominant one. Furthermore, department heads occasionally involve in subordinates/instructors consulting and evaluate their opinions and suggestions before making the decisions.

Perception of department heads about their own leadership style did not significantly vary across demographic variables such as work experience, level of education and disciplinary

background. This means that these demographic variables gave the impression that they do not affect leadership styles of department heads.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion drawn the following recommendations were forwarded.

1. Situational Leadership Theory states that there is no single leadership style that fits all the situation. Hence, department heads as leaders need to vary their leadership style in order to fit the situations. Specially, in higher education institutions, where majority of the teaching staff hold post graduate degree and where department heads spent most of their time with routine activities such as administrative, interpersonal and resource development, delegative leadership style seems to be appropriate and department heads, therefore, should exercise such kind of leadership style as needed.

2. Varying leadership style to fit situations was not an easy task. It needs critically looking into the nature of the work and employees behavior. In order to equip department heads with such analysis skill, the university should arrange continuous and relevant training for department heads in various areas of leadership.

This study was a one shot. It was not carried out over a period of time and the findings showed leadership style of department heads in a particular time. Since the leadership style could vary across situations and time, further research need to be conducted if the predominant leadership style of department heads is similar over a period of time and to establish if there are differences in the leadership style of department heads across universities in the country and also longitudinally.

References

- Al-Omari, A. (2007). Leadership styles and style adaptability of deans and department chairs at three institutions of higher education in Jordan. *Educational Journal*, 21(83).
- Al-Omari, A., Qablan, A., Khasawneh, S. and Khasawneh, A. (2008). *Leadership and Adaptability styles of Deans at Public Jordanian Universities*. *Journal of Research*, 22(6).
- Bass, B. M. (1981). *Personal selling and transactional/ transformational leadership*. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 17(3).
- Bass, M. B. (1985). *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*. New York: Free Press.
- Bitzer, M. and Koen, M. (2010). *Academic Leadership in Higher Education: A participative perspective from one institution*. *Higher Education Leadership*, 8(1).
- Bolden, R., Gosling, J., Marturano, A. & Dennison, P. (2003). *A Review of Leadership Theory and Competence Framework Edited Version of a Report for Chase Consulting and the Management Standards Centre*. UK: Centre for Leadership Studies University of Exeter. Bolton, MA: Anker.
- Dull Idoyd .(1981). *Supervision: School Leadership: Hand Book*. Chicago: Charless E. Merrile Publishing Company. Dyer, B.G., & Miller, M. (1999). A

- Critical Review of Literature Related to The Department Chair Position. ERIC: ED 432 193.
- Fullan, M. (1992). *Successful School Improvement: The Implementation Perspectives and Beyond*. Buckingham: Open University press.
- Gay, L.R. (1987). *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application*. (3rd Ed.): Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Publishing Company.
- Gay, L.R. (1980). *Educational Evaluation and Measurement*. Columbus: Charles Publishing Company.
- Gmelch, W.H. (2002a). *The Call for Department Leaders*. Paper presented At the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (54th, New York, NY). ERIC : ED 460 098
- Gorsky, P. et al. (2010). *The Relationship between Academic Discipline and Dialogic Behavior in Open University Course Forums*. International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, 11(2).
- Govindsamy, V. (2006). *An Analysis of Self Perception Leadership Style against Demographic Variables*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Hersey, P., Blanchard, K.H., & Johnson, D.E. (1996). *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hersey, P., and Blanchard, K .H. (1982). *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources*. Third Edition. Englewood Cliffs, N .J.,: Prentice-Hall.
- Hersey, P., Blanchard, K .H. and LaMonica, E .L. (1976). *A Situational Approach to Supervision: Leadership Theory and the Supervising Nurse*. Supervisor Nurse, United States.
- Higher Education System Overhaul. (2004). Report of the Higher education strategy overhaul committee of inquiry into governance, leadership and management in Ethiopia's higher education system. Addis Ababa: Ministry of Education.
- Jimma University.(2007). *Strategic Plan of Jimma University (2007-2016): The Transformation Agenda*. Unpublished Document.
- Katz, D. (1982). *The effects of group longevity on project communication and performance*. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 27(1).
- Keiser, J. D., (2004). *Chief Executives from 1960–1989: A trend toward professionalization*. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 10(3).
- Kreiner, K. (1999). *Knowledge and mind: The management of intellectual resources*. *Advances in Managerial Cognition and Organizational Information Processing*, 6, 1–29.

- Leaming, D. R. (1998). *Academic Leadership: A practical Guide to Chairing the Department*. Jaffrey, N.H., Anker Publishing Company, Inc.
- Lucas, A.F. (2000a). *Leading Academic Change: Essential Roles for Department Chairs*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publisher.
- Mullins .L. J. (2005). *Management and Organizational Behavior* .7th ed, Visit us on the World Wide Web at: www.pearsoned.co.uk.
- Neumann, Y. and Borris, S.B. (1978). Paradigm development and leadership style of university department chair persons. *Research in Higher education*, 9, 291-302
- Santiago, P., Tremblay, K., Basri, E. and Arnal, E. (2008). *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society: Special Features: Equity, Innovation, Labor Market, Internationalization*. Volume 2. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- Smart, J.C and Elton, C.F. (1976). Administrative Roles of department chairs. *New direction for nstitutional Research*, 10, 39-60.
- Swinyard, A. W. & Bond, F. A. (1980). *Who gets promoted?* Harvard Business Review, 19(1).
- Teshome Yizengaw (2005). *Policy Development In Higher Education In Ethiopia And The Role Of Donors And Development Partners*. Paper presented at the International Expert Meeting-“Formulas that work: Making Higher education Support More effective; The Hague, The Netherlands, 23-24, May, 2005.
- Transitional Government of Ethiopia [TGE]. (1994). *The New Education an d Training Policy*. ddis Ababa. EMPDA.
- Viljoen (1997) 'Themes in Management and Changes in Africa.' <http://africamanagement.org>, 24 May, 2011.
- Vroom, V. H., & Yetton, P. W. (1973). *The New Leadership: Managing Participation in Organizations*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Wolverton, M, Gmlech, W,H, Montez, J., & Niess, C.T. (2001). *The Changing natureof academic deanship*. ASHE-ERIC, Higher Education Report, 28(1).
- Yousef, D.A. (2000). *Organizational commitment: a mediator of the relationships of leadership behavior with job satisfaction and performance in a non-western country*. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 15(1).
- Yukl, G. A. (1989). *Leadership in Organizations* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.