

Full Length Research Paper

Some perspectives of staff perceptions regarding leadership decision-making: A higher education view

Ngambi H. C. and Nthoesane M. G.*

College of Economic and Management Sciences, UNISA, Pretoria, South Africa.
Corporate Services, Centre for Business Management, UNISA, Pretoria, South Africa.

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Higher education is by nature a knowledge institution that requires the knowledge, skills and abilities of more than one person if it is to be successful. Achieving this success cannot be a function of a single individual; it requires team or shared leadership that will provide exceptional and excellent organisational governance. The research on which this article is based explored staff perceptions on the need or desire for shared leadership in a university; and their perception of college leadership as being inclusive. To achieve this, a web-based survey was conducted among all University of South Africa College of Economic and Management Sciences staff. A 42.1% response rate (n=254) was achieved. This approach allowed for index construction methodology, which supports longitudinal analysis whereby changes in performance ratings can be monitored over time. Such an approach is also ideal to measure the effect of corrective actions following from previous measurement periods. The results showed that staff perceived leadership to promote inclusivity and that there were elements of shared leadership through consultative processes (index: 50 to 74). However, further research need to be conducted to establish the depth of this staff involvement and to ascertain the benefits that can result from such a symbiotic leadership relationship.

Key words: Higher education, decision making, shared leadership, staff participation.

INTRODUCTION

Can leadership be shared? The complexities and demands of higher education institutions (HEIs) and the emergence of the open distance learning (ODL) system present a challenge to HEI leadership. The ODL system in particular has become a driving force in addressing the fundamental issue of access to quality higher education globally, and the system's success is dependent on its leadership. In countries like South Africa where there are high levels of social injustices (such as illiteracy and unemployment), this mode of education is pivotal in addressing these injustices brought about by the apartheid system of the past. The ODL system of education meets the educational needs of many capable adults who missed the opportunity to benefit from conventional university education (Siaciwena, 2006). In

addition, it contributes to the development of human resources, and widens the access to university education to many, who for various reasons cannot attend a university full-time.

In order to remain relevant and competitive, institutions need to realise the complexity of leadership that is required to provide governance to these institutions. Both Glatter and Kydd (2003) and Kulati (2000) provide an insight into challenges that face HEIs, and specifically emphasise the importance of leadership inclusiveness in order to address these challenges. This notion of inclusive and shared leadership is further reported and supported by other authors, including Boland (2005) and Möller (2006). The questions have often been asked whether there is a need for shared leadership, and whether there is any recognised value in advocating for shared leadership. Since research has shown that there are recognisable benefits to shared leadership (Boland, 2005; Coughlin et al., 2007; Kovač et al., 2003; Lumby,

*Corresponding author. E-mail: Nthoemg@unisa.ac.za.

2003; Menon, 2005; Möller, 2006) it is clearly important for HEIs to have shared leadership if they are to realise their responsibilities.

The inclusivity of leadership within HEIs is attracting increasing attention. However, the role of staff in this context is often not given prominence. This observation is supported by Kovač et al. (2003), who assert that evidence of employee inclusion in issues of leadership is limited. As a result, if this notion of shared and inclusive leadership is not given necessary attention, then HEIs are underutilising their potential, and they risk institutions failing to deliver optimally on their responsibilities. It is in this light that employee participation in a shared system of leadership and governance deserves greater attention, both in practice and in principle.

The purpose of this article is to report on research that was undertaken to explore employee perceptions of the leadership of an HEI as being inclusive and to reveal the attitudes of staff with regard to being involved in decision making and teamwork as an indication of their desire for shared governance and shared leadership. This will provide a platform for institutional leadership to adapt their leadership in order to leverage the benefits inherent in inclusive leadership. To achieve the aim of the research, a web-based survey was conducted among the employees of the University of South Africa's College of Economic and Management Sciences (CEMS).

The article continues with a review of the literature on higher education and leadership, followed by an explanation of the research methodology. A questionnaire consisting of both closed and open-ended questions was applied to generate data. This is followed by a presentation and discussion of the results. Finally, the conclusions and recommendations are presented and the potential limitations acknowledged.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews literature on the importance of shared leadership, governance of HEIs and how to improve participation of all the stakeholders involved. Subsequently, the challenges facing HEIs are taken into consideration. In conclusion, staff participation in shared governance is highlighted as the gap that was addressed through this research.

Governance and leadership of higher education institutions

The term 'governance' is approached and used differently by various countries and scholars. Both Moses (2006) and the University of Oxford (2006) define governance as the processes of decision-making within an institution, which enable an institution to set its policies and objectives, to achieve them, and to monitor its progress

towards their achievement. It also refers to the mechanisms whereby those who have been given the responsibility and authority to pursue those policies and objectives are held to account (Simplicio, 2006). The ability to account can therefore be enhanced by sharing and distributing leadership responsibilities, of which governance forms part.

Gayle et al. (2004) argue that effective governance is not easy to achieve. They point out that there are a number of challenges to effective governance in higher education which include (i) too many constituencies at the academic table with conflicting agendas and mandates like identifying who the client is or who should ultimately be given the power to decide; (ii) differing philosophical views on the extent of inclusiveness and depth of consultation with employees; and (iii) differences in perspectives between students, staff, trustees and administration.

In order to overcome these challenges AFT Higher Education (2010) and Olson (2009) suggest that HEIs should adopt a shared system of governance, where all the stakeholders can have a guaranteed voice in decision-making but not ultimate authority. This voice could enable institutions to develop the culture of shared responsibilities (Schuetz, 1999) and could capitalise on institutional collective intelligence (University of Arizona Shared Governance Review Committee, 2008) in achieving institutional objectives. Furthermore, having this voice could also strengthen the democratic principle (Miller and Pope, 2000; Wood, 1993) in the institution and create an environment of responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency (Larsen et al., 2009) in leading HEIs.

Shared governance aims to ensure that there is a balance between staff participation in planning and decision making and an administrative accountability in institutions (Darden, 2009; Olson, 2009). Darden (2009) and Olson (2009) also emphasise that "shared" means everyone has a role; however, it does not mean that every constituency gets to participate at every stage, but certain constituencies are given primary responsibility over decision making in certain areas. In addition, Simplicio (2006) argues that in shared governance one group cannot claim dominance and that all groups are equally critical to the success of the institution.

Miller et al. (2000) assert that shared governance has proven to be both creative and beneficial in the institutions because it leads to greater personal investment by staff. Furthermore, it promotes greater organisational commitment; provides for wider selection of options; leads to creative communication among all stakeholders and enhances stronger dedication to the institution (Miller et al., 2000). These benefits can then be translated into the best practices, namely creating an atmosphere that fosters trust; developing a collaborative attitude and participatory processes; enhancing extensive communication channels; encouraging informed participation and training; focusing on effective and efficient processes

and subjects and allowing for flexibility in shared governance structures (University of Arizona Shared Governance Review Committee, 2008). Finally, shared leadership can be viewed as a decision-making culture and a decision-making tool (Miller and Pope, 2000).

The importance of shared leadership in university governance

HEIs are highly complex institutions with complex governance structures. These institutions need to stay in touch with the realities of today while developing leaders and visions for tomorrow. The ability to run these institutions successfully requires a leadership beyond an individual and a position; it requires shared leadership. Pearce et al. (2009: 234) view shared leadership as leadership that involves “broadly sharing power and influence among a set of individuals (management, staff and students) rather than centralising it in the hands of a single individual who acts in the clear role of dominant superior”. Shared leadership is defined by Lumby (2003: 287) as the leadership that is “created partly by the conscious delegation or ad hoc dispersal of responsibility for task”. It follows from these observations that shared leadership engages all the stakeholders in the attainment of leadership objectives and responsibilities within an organisation. The latter refers to providing governance and decision-making. This act of sharing leadership demonstrates the value attached to inclusivity and participation for all concerned in the organisation. University of Wisconsin River Fall (n.d. 4) defines inclusivity as “the integrity of social conscience and process by which each and every voice is heard and participatory in the decision-making process of the campus and its external stakeholders [...]”. This is the leadership that can realise the aspirations of HEIs and leverage a broader talent in order to provide for better and shared governance. This system of leadership consists of cooperative, team-oriented, collaborative, transparent, fair and contextual. This is the leadership that values the ideas and views of the broader team, in order to broaden the richness of decision making in institutions.

Beaty (2007) says that this is a kind of leadership that aims to achieve optimum worker productivity, combine risk-taking and innovation, foster participation of employees and empower the workforce. Accordingly, it is the kind of leadership that promotes learning in institutions (Van der Heide, 2007), bolsters leadership development (Charan, 2005) and excels in tapping into the needs and fears of staff (Buckingham, 2005). Therefore, shared leadership provides an environment of growth and promotes commitment from the staff by enhancing their personal abilities. In addition, it puts employees at ease because it is sensitive, recognises and rewards talents, is operationally aware and active,

but is not micromanaging (Dicocco, 2007).

Shared leadership is therefore the leadership that sets the vision and motivates staff to rally behind that vision; the leadership that creates organisational ownership among the staff; the leadership that values morals and integrity and respects cultural differences. Lumby (2003) concludes that it is a kind of leadership that is consciously distributed throughout an institution, spanning all levels and flowing both up and down hierarchies. It also ensures that governance is shared and embraced and is committed to shared responsibilities. This system of leadership is both relevant and necessary in countries like South Africa, given the challenges that are still prevalent in the higher education system.

Challenges facing higher education

The key developmental and leadership agenda that is facing South African higher education is that of transformation and addressing the inequalities caused by apartheid. The notion of inclusivity in leadership is reflected in two of the three critical higher education challenges that were identified by the Department of Higher Education (DoE) (1997). Interestingly, the same challenges are still prevalent to date as is noted by Fielden (2008). These challenges are briefly discussed subsequently.

Increasing and broadening participation of staff in issues of leadership: Emphasis is especially placed on the participation of the previously disadvantaged individuals in matters that affect them. Previously disadvantaged individuals include women, Africans, Indians, coloureds and the disabled. The Department of Education (DoE) recognises the need to develop a policy that will be used as a tool to address patterns of fragmentation, inequality and inefficiency so prevalent in the HEI arena of South Africa (DoE, 1997).

Responding to societal interests and needs: According to the DoE (1997), this aim can be achieved by restructuring the higher education system and its institutions to meet the needs of an increasingly technologically oriented economy. In itself, this is not a challenge that is directly linked with leadership; however, it addresses the ability to respond to societal needs required by institutions to engage with society and therefore to highlight the need for inclusivity in institutional leadership responsibilities to a certain extent.

Encouraging cooperation and partnerships in governance and leadership: The DoE (1997) highlights the need to develop a policy that will re-conceptualise the relationship between higher education and both its internal and external stakeholders in order to promote inclusiveness in governance. It must also create an enabling institutional culture that is sensitive to values that affirm diversity and promote reconciliation.

In addition, Higher Education South Africa (2010)

highlights that other challenges entail shared responsibility among a variety of stakeholders and issues relating to power for institutional autonomy. Addressing these challenges requires not only a mindset shift but also a system of governance that is accommodative and leadership that is inclusive and shared in its approach.

Staff participation in higher education institution leadership responsibilities

Studies by Boland (2005) and Menon (2005, 2003) report the involvement and participation of students in matters relating to HEI leadership. However, the involvement and participation of staff in leadership matters remain elusive. To support this observation, a study by Kovač et al. (2003) highlights that staff involvement in decision-making processes at the university management level was non-existent and that staff's involvement was confined to operational and technical issues only, with no influence on issues of leadership at the strategic university level. Kovač et al. (2003) study confirms the findings of Miller (2001) who argue that college presidents regard shared governance as a system of checks and balances and not as an integral part of institutional decision making, and moreover do not blindly support the staff involvement in issues of leadership and governance. The same observation is echoed by Mok (2010) who reported that staff members felt less emancipated and empowered because they were never involved or even consulted with regard to issues of institutional leadership and governance. It is in the light of these findings that the research on which this article is based intends to establish the perceptions of staff with regard to their involvement in decision making together with the college leadership and how they perceive the college leadership at large. The hypothesis that the study aimed to explore, reads;

H₀: There is a perception that college staff is not involvement in matters relating to leadership decision-making responsibilities.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The College of Economic and Management Sciences (CEMS) at the University of South Africa (UNISA) is the largest in Africa with a student complement of over 200000. A census was conducted among all 604 CEMS permanent staff to measure their perception on the inclusivity of the college leadership in decision making. A self-administered web-based survey approach was used to collect information among all staff members. The research questionnaire for this research was designed by the Bureau of Market Research (BMR) of UNISA, with inputs from the CEMS Executive Dean. The questionnaire was uploaded on the Lime Survey software program and pilot tested prior to being implemented.

Lists containing the e-mail addresses of all CEMS staff members were provided by the Office of the Executive Dean and UNISA Human Resources Department. These lists were merged and used

to invite all CEMS staff to complete and return the staff leadership perception questionnaire within one week of receiving the e-mail invitation to participate. The e-mail invitation was accompanied by a letter of motivation from the Executive Dean to support and participate in the survey. The initial invitation to participate was supplemented by two solicitations to encourage late or non-respondents to participate.

Research focus

The questions in the CEMS leadership perception questionnaire largely used a 5-point closed-ended rating approach to capture staff's confidence levels regarding the staff perception of aspects of leadership inclusivity. The questionnaire concluded with an open-ended response option to allow staff to comment finally on aspects most liked and valued about CEMS leadership (which they regarded as strong pillars of the college), to identify future challenges to be addressed by CEMS leadership, and finally to identify perceived method(s) of attending to such challenges.

Research instrument design

The questionnaire designed for the survey included ratings of staff on their perceptions of leadership inclusivity. More specifically, the Likert scale measurement method that was used to measure these perceptions used the following scale anchors: Perception ratings; very poor (1), poor (2), average (3), good(4) and excellent (5).

The Likert format lends itself to a basic method of index construction. Since identical response categories were used for several items measuring leadership perception, each item was scored in a uniform manner. To illustrate the way in which the index method was used to construct index scores for each relevant research variable it should be noted, for example, that all 'very poor' ratings were allotted a weight of 0, while poor, average, good and excellent ratings were weighted by 25, 50, 75 and 100, respectively. The index was constructed by weighing scores using percentiles, thus making the scores to range between 0 to 100, where positive code (5) was assigned the highest percentile. The recording occurred as follows:

1. Very dissatisfied = 0
2. Dissatisfied = 25
3. Neutral= 50
4. Satisfied = 75
5. Very satisfied = 100.

The end-result returned an average index score for each variable, such that:

1. 0 to 20 (very poor) indicates that staff perceives leadership as not inclusive; that is the leadership take decisions unilaterally;
2. 21 to 40 (poor) indicates that there is an intention from leadership to be inclusive; however, it is reflected only in policies, college documents and the performance management system;
3. 41 to 60 (average) indicates that leadership promotes inclusivity and there are elements of sharing leadership through consultative processes;
4. 61 to 80 (good) indicates that shared leadership is institutionalised in the college; staff participate in providing input into college plans, service charter and other areas of decision making;
5. 81 to 100 (excellent) indicates that shared leadership is regarded as the college culture and the way of life in the college.

This explanation also reflects the value of the index method when

making relative comparisons between a set of selected variables. Regardless of whether all research variables return low or high shared leadership perception index scores, some variables will always reflect relatively higher or lower performance ratings when compared collectively. This methodology also supports a business approach towards identifying relatively lower performance rating index variables and towards focusing on these variables in support of corrective actions and higher staff productivity.

Finally, the index method supports longitudinal analysis whereby changes in performance ratings could be monitored over time (Babbie, 2010; Lester et al., 2008). Such an approach could be appropriate to measure the effect of corrective actions following from previous measurement periods. With no repetitive studies conducted to date in the South African context, the baseline findings of this research might be useful as a benchmark for future studies.

Pilot research and ethical clearance

A total of 15 staff members were used to pilot test the research instrument and methodology used. The pre-test showed positive findings in terms of the research approach and participation of respondents, and featured very promising prospects in terms of research focus, relevance and accuracy. As the research involved engagement with humans, the research project was also ethically cleared by the CEMS ethics committee.

Data editing, capturing and storing

The web-based survey approach permitted the electronic capturing of data on submission of the survey. Senior BMR staff edited, verified and cleaned the captured data prior to storing and analysis. The analysis is presented later in this study. The data presentation and analysis section elaborates in more detail on the participation rate of CEMS staff, which indirectly reflects on the engagement of people currently employed at CEMS.

Data presentation and analysis

This section presents the outcome of the CEMS staff leadership survey reflecting on the perceptions, reflections and leadership evaluation of 254 staff members regarding 29 leadership performance areas of CEMS. The discussions are presented according to selected research constructs, namely tenure, gender, designation and age. A description of the sample that participated in the research is presented as follows. These profiles support the aim to better contextualise the outcome of the research.

Sample

A total of 254 staff members out of the total number of 604 participated in the CEMS staff leadership perception survey. This sample consisted of staff members from all the three schools (namely School of Accounting Sciences, School of Economic Science and School of Management Sciences) and centres and bureaux. The response rate was 42.1%, which is regarded as exceptional for a web-based survey which usually results in a response rate of below 35% (Baruch and Holtom, 2008).

Of the total number of CEMS staff participants who indicated their gender, 42.1% are male while 57.9% are female. The other construct is that of population, one being the historically disadvantaged individuals (HDIs), the Africans, coloureds and Indians, and the other being the non-HDIs, the whites or those of

Caucasian origin. Even though female whites are also classified as HDIs, in this research this classification was not considered. Of those staff members who indicated their population group, 63.8% fell into the non-HDI group, while the HDI group was 36.2%. A third (35.1%) of the participants fell into the age group of 21 to 34 years, while approximately a quarter were in the 35 to 44 (26.8%) age group, a quarter in the 45 to 54 (26.0%) age group and finally 12.1% in the age group of 55 and above.

The last construct relates to tenure, which refers to the number of years a staff member has been employed by the college. Those who had been with the college for two years or less accounted for 40.2%, then participants who had been with the college for 3 to 10 years accounted for 28.7% and finally those who had been in the college for 10 years and more made up the remaining 31.1% of the sample. Results according to each of these constructs are discussed subsequently.

RESULTS

Appendices 1 to 4 present the results of the research. The results are presented by tenure, age, designation and gender.

Tenure

Results show that those respondents who had been with the college for two years or less perceive the leadership inclination towards being shared as good (64.03). These respondents seemed to believe that their input was valued and was utilised in areas of leadership decision making. However, those respondents who had been employed in the college for three years or more seemed to perceive the college's shared leadership nature to be average (57.13), meaning that they believed that they were being consulted but their input was not necessarily being utilised by the leadership (Appendix 1).

Age

Results by age showed that on average the respondents perceived the leadership to be promoting inclusivity with an average index of 60.75. The perception of the age groups 21 to 34 (62.76), 35 to 44 (62.07) and 55 years and older (60.72) of leadership being shared was good, meaning that they believed that their input was utilised when decisions were made. However, the same cannot be said for the age group 45 to 54 years (56.56) who perceived the nature of leadership as being shared as just average. These respondents felt that they were just being consulted (Appendix 2).

Designation

The results show that the HDIs rated leadership to be average, with a rating of 58.72. These individuals seemed to believe that the leadership was inclusive and they were

being consulted on issues of leadership, but that their input was not necessarily used when decisions are made. On the other hand, the non-HDI scored relatively higher (62.88) than the HDI. Their perception was that they were being consulted and that their participation contributed in the college planning and decision making (Appendix 3).

Gender

Appendix 4 presents the results for the gender construct. Both males' and females' perception on the inclusivity of leadership was good, with the ratings of 60.97 and 60.59, respectively. Gliem and Gliem (2003: 88) note that "when using Likert-type scales it is imperative to calculate and report Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency reliability for any scales or subscales one may be using". Cronbach's alpha was calculated to measure the internal consistency, that is, how closely related the set of questions are as a measure of shared leadership perception. A value of 0.884 on 29 items was found, which indicates high reliability and provides evidence that the items measure the underlying construct. In order to provide evidence that the scale used is one-dimensional, factor analysis was performed. Factor analysis is one method of measuring dimensionality; accordingly, the factor loading analysis was conducted using the principal component analysis. Six components were extracted from the analysis. The factors loaded high on the first component, providing evidence that the items measured the perception on shared leadership and decision making.

Since the questionnaire used is a perception questionnaire (as it relies on the perception of individuals), it only has to adhere to face validity. According to Babbie and Mouton (2007) face validity (or logical validity) refers to the degree that particular empirical measures may or may not conform to our common agreements and our mental images concerning a particular concept. The questions were presented to an expert in order to provide input in the items included in the questionnaire. This method ensured that the questionnaire included the items relating to leadership qualities and therefore adhered to the face validity of the instrument.

Given the results provided in Appendices 1 to 4, the next logical question was to ascertain whether there are any differences within groups. To achieve this, a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test (this test is appropriate for testing more than two categories) was performed for age and tenure constructs and a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test (this test is appropriate for testing two categories) for gender and population constructs. The significance level was set at 0.05. With regard to age (Appendix 6) six responses were found to be statistically significant, and the observed trend was that the age group 21 to 34 years ranked the highest with age group 45 to 54 years being the lowest. With regard to tenure in

all the significant responses, the two years or less category ranked the highest with the exception of perception regarding questions 'You are involved in decision decision-making affecting your position' and 'You participate in decision making' where the 10 years or more group ranked the highest. The non-HDIs ranked the highest in the four significant responses under population and the only significant response, namely ability to have an impact on decision making, ranked the highest by the male gender.

DISCUSSION

The results seem to suggest that staff members who had been with the college for three years or more perceived the college leadership to be inclusive and consultative, but they did not necessarily believe that their input was utilised in decision making. Given that the college executive leadership had been in that position for just over a year when the research was undertaken, and that the leadership was bringing about many changes, this might in part explain the feelings of these staff members with regard to whether their inputs were utilised or not.

Similarly, those who had been in the college for less than two years did feel that they were included in leadership decision making and that leadership consulted them, and therefore they would have future inputs in issues of leadership. For example, they ranked the highest in response to 'Your views and participation in management issues are valued' and 'Opportunities for advancement in management'. Surprisingly, the perception regarding 'Opportunities for personal leadership development' was found to be not significant, even though one would have expected that in an environment where staff feel that leadership is shared, there will also be significance with regard to leadership development. These results seem to be in contrast with that of Mok (2010) and Schuetz (1999), in that there is positive perception of leadership's attempt at being inclusive and sharing responsibilities.

It is interesting to note that the perception with regard to teamwork across departments consistently scored the lowest on the index, by white staff members, who had been with the college for more than three years and were over the age of 45 years. This finding was found to be statistically significant (Appendix 5) by age construct; accordingly it can be concluded that members of the college above the age of 45 years, perceived that there was a lack of teamwork across departments. This perception could be attributed to the fact that these members of staff might have been used to working on their own with less interaction with other departments, most probably in competition with other departments.

This research also contradicts the findings of Kovač et al. (2003) that staff involvement in decision-making processes with regard to university management issues

was non-existent. This contradiction is reflected by the positive and significant responses by the non-HDI group on the following questions: 'that you are empowered to influence the quality of decisions in your work'; 'That you participate in problem solving'; 'that your manager ensures that you are recognised and appreciated for your efforts' and 'that your views and participation in management issues are valued'. However, this involvement in decisions seems to be dominated by a white group which brings about a question of equity and transformation in the college, calling for more sensitivity in this regard.

It is commendable to have a significant and a positive perception towards having 'an ability to have an impact in decision making', because it indicates the desire for employees and willingness of leadership to share power and allow all in the college to contribute, a concept supported by AFT Higher Education (2010) and Olson (2009). It however is worrisome to observe that males (even though in the minority) are dominant in having an impact on decision making. This raises questions with regard to the role of women in decision making in the college. It is interesting to note that two of the three most senior leadership positions in the college are held by women. Overall, it can be concluded that staff perceived the leadership to be promoting a shared leadership governance principle. However, it was also found that not all aspects of leadership responsibilities were considered to be shared; this is supported by Miller (2001) and Olson (2009). The staff generally perceived that the leadership of the college was inclusive, and they felt part of the college and contributed in matters of leadership and governance. A similar conclusion was reached by Miller and Pope (2000), Wood (1993) and Miller et al. (2000).

The results also seem to suggest that staff members who had been with the college for 3 to 10 years perceived their involvement in decision making affecting their job to be just average. Firstly, this observation supports the findings of Kovač et al. (2003), and secondly, this should serve to prompt the college management to pay more attention in improving the involvement of this group in the decision-making processes given that this group contributes about a third of the workforce in the college. Furthermore, the same group perceived that they received average recognition for their contribution; this perception can be linked directly to the ability to address the challenge of encouraging co-operation in leadership (DoE, 1997). When people feel that they are valued and recognised for their efforts they tend to be more willing to engage in a meaningful partnership, rather than just being compliant.

It has been argued in this article that promoting shared leadership is necessary in alleviating the fears of staff (Buckingham, 2005), and that it bolsters leadership development; however, respondents who were 55 years and over did not seem to perceive that their fears were alleviated, even though this perception is not statistically significant. It is important for management to pay

attention to perceptions of this nature given the institutional memory and wisdom that resides within this group (55 years and over), as the college might like to retain these individuals for the role they can play in developing the younger generation of staff in the college, among other things. It can also be concluded that in the college those staff members who were 44 years and less perceived that there were opportunities for them to advance in management, more so than those above the age of 45 years (Appendix 5), so the college management might want to take note of this observation when planning for management development initiatives and activities.

The results of this research highlight that with regard to leadership issues in the college, tenure is the important construct that needs attention (Appendix 5). Even though other constructs (age, gender and designation) have some significant results, tenure stands out as the construct that needs much attention from the college management, based on the significance of the results extracted from this construct.

Conclusions

The aim of the study on which this article is based was to explore whether the leadership of the College of Economic and Management Sciences at UNISA was perceived by staff as inclusive. A further aim was to report on the attitudes of staff with regard to being involved in decision making and teamwork as an indication of their desire for shared leadership.

The outcome of the research reflects a level of staff appreciation for the college leadership's intention to be inclusive, and this is reflected across gender, race, population designation and tenure in the institution. This suggests that the college leadership is responding to the increasing need for staff participation in leadership and decision making.

Even though the staff indicated that they did not believe that the leadership was being fully shared in the institution, one can conclude from the results reported in this article that there was generally a positive mood and a feeling that the leadership was acknowledging and engaging staff in college leadership matters. The research has also revealed that there is a need to pay attention to differences in age, tenure and race in developing strategies to address issues of governance and leadership in the college. More so, the results of this research highlight that with regard to leadership issues in the college, attention should be paid to tenure and to staff members above the age of 45 years. Accordingly, this renders a 'one size fits all' strategy ineffective. This research has provided some insights into how leadership inclusivity is perceived by staff. The findings in the foregoing are in line with those of Bowlers and Cooper (2009) and Dye and Garman (2006).

Based on the findings of this research conducted at UNISA, one of the mega universities and the largest in Africa, it can be recommended that HEIs should be proactive in addressing issues of leadership by ensuring the participation of staff in leadership decision making and leadership advancement activities. This might enable more staff members to be exposed to leadership issues that should result in the enhancement of staff leadership skills, thus increasing the skills and intelligence pool of HEIs. It is this broadened pool that could enhance the institutions' competitiveness and innovativeness in providing winning leadership. Furthermore, the research provides information that can be utilised for decision making and strategic leadership formulation at HEIs.

It is recommended that HEIs pay attention to leadership skills and competencies when appointing managers. Those who lack managerial skills may put the benefits gained through inclusive leadership at risk. Such individuals might think that they know it all and therefore do not see the need to involve staff in leadership issues. Thus it is important to expose all managers and staff in HEIs to appropriate training and development to equip them with the requisite leadership understanding and skills, thus empowering them to be able to participate meaningfully in distributed leadership. HEIs should also take note of the differences in age, tenure and race when involving staff in leadership matters, because of the differences found between these groups. It is therefore likely that different approaches should be used when addressing matters of leadership within these groups. It is also recommended that further studies be conducted to establish the depth of staff involvement in matters of leadership and to determine the benefits that arise from this symbiotic leadership relationship.

Since this was baseline research using a unique research design based on an index methodology, implemented in the higher education environment in a South African college of Economic and Management Sciences, it limits any comparisons. Despite this shortcoming, the research model presented a constructive design to identify constructs affecting staff leadership perceptions regarding inclusivity. However, the study reported in this article did not attend to the cause of differences in the stated constructs. In addition, the study also focused on the college leadership which might differ from that of university-wide leadership. Lastly, the study did not differentiate between permanent staff and contract-based staff; and did not differentiate between academic and administrative staff.

This article is aimed to prompt discussion among leaders of HEIs about the importance and relevance of sharing leadership in their respective institutions. In higher education, in South Africa as well as elsewhere, the success of effective leading is in making consultation part of leadership and in sharing leadership. Leadership does not lie within one person or group; effective leadership can and must be shared.

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Appendix 1. Shared leadership perception averages by tenure.

Research focus area	Tenure			
	2 years or less	3-10 years	10 years or more	Total
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
That employees are treated equally and with respect	59.35	53.25	54.01	55.94
That equal career and leadership opportunities are provided for men and women	67.99	61.04	60.19	63.58
That you are empowered to influence the quality of decisions in your work	66.12	58.44	66.36	63.96
That you are involved in decision-making affecting your position/work	58.88	48.7	59.88	56.23
That you have fair opportunities for leadership advancement in CEMS	61.68	56.49	52.16	57.26
That you participate in problem solving	62.15	52.92	62.96	59.72
That you receive appropriate recognition of your contributions	64.72	50	55.86	57.74
That your manager/supervisor ensures that you are recognised and appreciated for your efforts	66.59	61.69	62.96	64.06
That your views and participation in management issues are valued	64.02	56.49	64.2	61.89
The team spirit in CEMS leadership	63.32	54.87	58.95	59.53
The team spirit in your direct work environment, including management related issues	64.02	53.25	64.2	60.94
Your work responsibilities are reasonable	71.26	56.82	61.73	64.15
Ability to have an impact in decision making	62.38	56.49	57.72	59.25
Opportunities for advancement in management	61.45	52.6	48.15	54.81
Opportunities for personal leadership development	70.56	65.26	64.81	67.26
Receive feedback on issues of leadership and governance	62.15	52.27	54.94	57.08
Receive supervision for leadership development	66.12	54.22	61.42	61.23
Teamwork within CEMS	60.98	52.27	57.72	57.45
Teamwork within department	63.79	56.17	64.2	61.7
Teamwork across departments	52.1	44.48	47.53	48.49
Valuing diversity	61.21	55.52	55.56	57.83
CEMS cares about people	66.12	58.77	58.02	61.51
Males and females are provided with equal career opportunities at CEMS	63.79	63.31	56.79	61.51
Caring about employees	65.19	59.09	56.17	60.66
Communication efficiency from CEMS leadership	65.19	52.92	52.16	57.64
Openness and honesty in leadership	64.02	56.17	56.48	59.43
Serving as ethical role model(s)	64.72	55.52	56.79	59.62
Setting direction and goals	71.26	62.99	61.73	65.94
Trustworthiness	65.65	58.77	59.26	61.7
AVERAGE (TOTAL)	64.03	55.89	58.38	59.93

Appendix 2. Shared leadership perception averages by age.

Research focus area	Age				Total Mean
	21-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55 years or older	
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	
That employees are treated equally and with respect	56.76	58.08	56.56	55.83	56.95
That equal career and leadership opportunities are provided for men and women	65.59	64.23	62.7	63.33	64.21
That you are empowered to influence the quality of decisions in your work	63.82	63.46	64.34	67.5	64.32
That you are involved in decision-making affecting your position/work	55	57.31	56.56	60.83	56.74
That you have fair opportunities for leadership advancement in CEMS	60.29	61.92	54.51	50	57.99
That you participate in problem solving	60.88	60.38	59.84	61.67	60.58
That your manager/supervisor ensures that you are recognised and appreciated for your efforts	65.88	63.46	62.3	64.17	64.11
That your views and participation in management issues are valued	61.76	64.23	59.02	65.83	62.24
The team spirit in CEMS leadership	63.53	61.92	52.87	61.67	60.17
The team spirit in your direct work environment, including management related issues.	63.24	59.62	61.48	64.17	61.93
Your work responsibilities are reasonable	69.71	65	58.61	65	65.04
Ability to have an impact in decision-making	57.65	64.23	56.15	63.33	59.75
Opportunities for advancement in management	59.71	60	49.18	49.17	55.81
Opportunities for personal leadership development	70.88	68.85	63.11	67.5	67.95
Receive feedback on issues of leadership and governance	60.88	56.92	52.46	59.17	57.47
Receive supervision for leadership development	63.82	59.62	58.2	66.67	61.62
Teamwork within CEMS	60	61.92	53.28	59.17	58.71
Teamwork within department	62.35	63.85	59.43	68.33	62.76
Teamwork across departments	53.24	51.54	43.03	46.67	49.38
Valuing diversity	62.35	58.85	53.69	57.5	58.61
CEMS cares about people	66.47	63.46	55.74	63.33	62.55
Males and females are provided with equal career opportunities at CEMS	63.24	63.85	59.02	58.33	61.72
Caring about employees	65.59	61.54	56.56	60.83	61.62
Communication efficiency from CEMS leadership	63.24	61.15	50.41	56.67	58.61
Keeping you informed	63.82	60.77	52.05	55.83	59.02
Openness and honesty in leadership	62.06	63.46	55.33	60.83	60.58
Serving as ethical role model(s)	62.06	65.77	56.15	58.33	61.1
Setting direction and goals	70.88	70	59.84	65.83	67.22
Trustworthiness	65.29	64.62	57.79	63.33	62.97
AVERAGE (TOTAL)	62.76	62.07	56.56	60.72	60.75

Appendix 3. Shared leadership perception averages by designation.

Research focus area	Designation		
	Non-HDI	HDI	Total
	Mean	Mean	Mean
That employees are treated equally and with respect	61.09	51.74	57.57
That equal career and leadership opportunities are provided for men and women	66.9	63.08	65.46
That fair and equal opportunities are available to air grievances in a safe environment without fear of retribution	60.39	53.78	57.89
That you are empowered to influence the quality of decisions in your work	69.19	59.01	65.35
That you are involved in decision-making affecting your position/work	60.74	53.49	58
That you have fair opportunities for leadership advancement in CEMS	59.15	56.4	58.11
That you participate in problem solving	63.91	56.4	61.07
That you receive appropriate recognition of your contributions	61.44	54.36	58.77
That your manager/supervisor ensures that you are recognised and appreciated for your efforts	67.43	58.72	64.14
That your views and participation in management issues are valued	66.73	56.98	63.05
The team spirit in CEMS in CEMS leadership	62.15	60.76	61.62
The team spirit in your direct work environment, including management related issues	65.85	57.56	62.72
Your work responsibilities are reasonable	66.37	64.53	65.68
Ability to have an impact in decision making	59.68	63.95	61.29
Opportunities for advancement in management	54.4	58.14	55.81
Opportunities for personal leadership development	70.77	64.24	68.31
Receive feedback on issues of leadership and governance	59.68	57.27	58.77
Receive supervision for leadership development	64.08	59.88	62.5
Teamwork within CEMS	60.39	58.14	59.54
Teamwork within department	66.2	58.72	63.38
Teamwork across departments	49.82	51.16	50.33
Valuing diversity	60.56	57.27	59.32
Males and females are provided with equal career opportunities at CEMS	64.08	61.63	63.16
Caring about employees	64.96	57.85	62.28
Communication efficiency from CEMS leadership	59.68	60.47	59.98
Openness and honesty in leadership	63.2	58.14	61.29
Serving as ethical role model(s)	61.8	60.76	61.4
Setting direction and goals	68.13	68.6	68.31
Trustworthiness	64.61	59.88	62.83
AVERAGE (TOTAL)	62.88	58.72	61.31

Appendix 4. Shared leadership perception averages by gender.

Research focus area	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
	Mean	Mean	Mean
That employees are treated equally and with respect	55.53	57.37	56.58
That equal career and leadership opportunities are provided for men and women	62.5	65.29	64.09
That you are empowered to influence the quality of decisions in your work	64.66	63.85	64.2
That you are involved in decisions-making affecting your position/work	58.65	55.94	57.1
That you have fair opportunities for leadership advancement in CEMS	56.01	60.07	58.33
That you participate in problem solving	62.98	58.99	60.7
That you receive appropriate recognition of your contributions	60.58	57.01	58.54
That your manager/supervisor ensures that you are recognised and appreciated for your efforts	65.63	62.95	64.09
That your views and participation in management issues are valued	63.22	61.33	62.14
The team spirit in CEMS in CEMS leadership	59.13	61.33	60.39
The team spirit in your direct work environment, including management related issues	65.14	58.99	61.63
Your work responsibilities are reasonable	66.83	63.49	64.92
Ability to have an impact in decision making	63.46	57.37	59.98
Opportunities for advancement in management	53.13	58.27	56.07
Opportunities for personal leadership development	68.03	67.45	67.7
Receive feedback on issues of leadership and governance	58.17	57.37	57.72
Receive supervision for leadership development	62.5	61.15	61.73
Team work within CEMS	57.69	59.35	58.64
Team work within department	65.38	60.25	62.45
Team work across departments	49.76	49.82	49.79
Valuing diversity	59.13	58.09	58.54
CEMS cares about people	60.1	64.57	62.65
Males and females are provided with equal career opportunities at CEMS	61.06	62.23	61.73
Caring about employees	61.3	61.87	61.63
Communication efficiency from CEMS leadership	57.45	59.89	58.85
Openness and honesty in leadership	62.02	59.35	60.49
Serving as ethical role model(s)	59.62	61.87	60.91
Setting direction and goals	66.59	67.99	67.39
Trustworthiness	61.78	63.67	62.86
AVERAGE (TOTAL)	60.97	60.59	60.75

Appendix 5. Kruskal Wallis statistical analysis for age and tenure.

	Test Statistics ^{a,b,c} Age			Tenure		
	Chi-square	df	Asymp. Sig.	Chi-square	df	Asymp. Sig.
** significance at 0.05						
That employees are treated equally and with respect	0.199	3	0.978	3.226	2	0.199
That equal career and leadership opportunities are provided for men and women	0.592	3	0.898	5.969	2	0.051
That you are empowered to influence the quality of decisions in your work	1.146	3	0.766	3.459	2	0.177
That you are involved in decision-making affecting your position/work	1.156	3	0.764	8.836	2	0.012**
That you have fair opportunities for leadership advancement in CEMS	7.421	3	0.060	6.144	2	0.046**
That you participate in problem solving	0.186	3	0.980	9.755	2	0.008**
That you receive appropriate recognition for your contributions	3.031	3	0.387	12.924	2	0.002**
That your manager/supervisor ensures that you are recognised and appreciated for your efforts	1.310	3	0.727	2.178	2	0.336
That your views and participation in management issues are valued	2.492	3	0.477	6.792	2	0.034**
The team spirit in CEMS leadership	11.485	3	0.009**	6.842	2	0.033**
The team spirit in your direct work environment, including management related issues	0.839	3	0.840	7.600	2	0.022**
Your work responsibilities are reasonable	10.897	3	0.012**	19.942	2	0.000**
Ability to have an impact in decision making	4.916	3	0.178	2.636	2	0.268
Opportunities for advancement in management	10.893	3	0.012**	13.313	2	0.001**
Opportunities for personal leadership development	4.904	3	0.179	4.554	2	0.103
Receive feedback on issues of leadership and governance.	6.041	3	0.110	10.199	2	0.006**
Receive supervision for leadership development	6.455	3	0.091	11.815	2	0.003**
Teamwork within CEMS	5.893	3	0.117	8.159	2	0.017**
Teamwork within department	2.439	3	0.486	4.604	2	0.100
Teamwork across departments	9.130	3	0.028**	6.299	2	0.043**
Valuing diversity	7.054	3	0.070	4.874	2	0.087
CEMS cares about people	7.365	3	0.061	7.410	2	0.025**
Males and females are provided with equal career opportunities at CEMS	2.389	3	0.496	4.158	2	0.125
Caring about employees	6.057	3	0.109	7.254	2	0.027**
Communication efficiency from CEMS leadership	11.177	3	0.011**	14.787	2	0.001**
Openness and honesty in leadership	4.291	3	0.232	6.201	2	0.045**
Serving as ethical role model(s)	6.022	3	0.111	9.379	2	0.009**
Setting direction and goals	8.775	3	0.032**	11.358	2	0.003**
Trustworthiness	5.804	3	0.122	5.397	2	0.067

a. Kruskal Wallis test. b. Grouping variable: Age. c. Grouping variable: Tenure

Appendix 6. Mann-Whitney U statistical analysis for gender and designation.

Test statistics ^{d,e}	Designation				Gender			
	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asym Sig. (2-tailed)	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
** significance at 0.05								
That employees are treated equally and with respect	5219.000	8960.000	-1.920	0.055	6920.000	12380.000	-0.591	0.554
That equal career and leadership opportunities are provided for men and women	5690.000	9431.000	-0.925	0.355	6971.000	12431.000	-0.506	0.613
That you are empowered to influence the quality of decisions in your work	4996.000	8737.000	-2.533	0.011**	7158.500	12618.500	-0.141	0.888
That you are involved in decision-making affecting your position/work	5299.500	9040.500	-1.765	0.078	6839.500	16569.500	-0.756	0.450
That you have fair opportunities for leadership advancement in CEMS	5907.000	9648.000	-0.435	0.663	6597.000	12057.000	-1.230	0.219
That you participate in problem solving	5123.000	8864.000	-2.211	0.027**	6483.500	16213.500	-1.483	0.138
That you receive appropriate recognition for your contributions	5322.000	9063.000	-1.732	0.083	6709.500	16439.500	-1.017	0.309
That your manager/supervisor ensures that you are recognised and appreciated for your efforts	5097.500	8838.500	-2.236	0.025**	6917.500	16647.500	-0.615	0.539
That your views and participation in management issues are valued	5161.000	8902.000	-2.141	0.032**	6780.500	16510.500	-0.898	0.369
The team spirit in CEMS leadership	5868.500	16021.500	-0.526	0.599	6838.000	12298.000	-0.767	0.443
The team spirit in your direct work environment, including management related issues	5282.500	9023.500	-1.831	0.067	6421.000	16151.000	-1.582	0.114
Your work responsibilities are reasonable	5892.500	9633.500	-0.499	0.618	6698.500	16428.500	-1.094	0.274
Ability to have an impact in decision making	5391.000	15544.000	-1.610	0.107	6237.500	15967.500	-1.968	0.049**
Opportunities for advancement in management	5540.500	15693.500	-1.234	0.217	6272.000	11732.000	-1.858	0.063
Opportunities for personal leadership development	5338.500	9079.500	-1.728	0.084	7198.000	12658.000	-0.060	0.952
Receive feedback on issues of leadership and governance.	5969.500	9710.500	-0.303	0.762	7101.000	16831.000	-0.250	0.802
Receive supervision for leadership development	5574.000	9315.000	-1.196	0.232	6988.000	16718.000	-0.479	0.632
Teamwork within CEMS	5954.500	16107.500	-0.339	0.735	6814.000	12274.000	-0.823	0.410
Teamwork within department	5370.500	9111.500	-1.632	0.103	6609.000	16339.000	-1.214	0.225
Teamwork across departments	5699.500	15852.500	-0.888	0.374	7159.500	12619.500	-0.133	0.894
Valuing diversity	6008.000	9749.000	-0.216	0.829	7148.500	16878.500	-0.156	0.876
CEMS cares about people	5790.500	9531.500	-0.704	0.481	6658.000	12118.000	-1.131	0.258
Males and females are provided with equal career opportunities at CEMS	6025.000	9766.000	-0.177	0.859	7058.500	12518.500	-0.329	0.742
Caring about employees	5225.500	8966.500	-1.941	0.052	7203.500	12663.500	-0.048	0.962
Communication efficiency from CEMS leadership	5954.500	16107.500	-0.333	0.739	6883.000	12343.000	-0.673	0.501
Openness and honesty in leadership	5565.500	9306.500	-1.184	0.236	6761.000	16491.000	-0.908	0.364

Appendix 6. Contd.

Serving as ethical role model(s)	6098.000	16251.000	-0.018	0.986	6981.500	12441.500	-0.489	0.625
Setting direction and goals	5740.000	15893.000	-0.839	0.401	7193.000	12653.000	-0.071	0.943
Trustworthiness	5755.000	9496.000	-0.773	0.440	7119.000	12579.000	-0.214	0.831

d. Grouping variable: Designation. e. Grouping variable: Gender.