

## College Evaluating Heads of Department: A Modest Proposal

Amanuel Gebru\*

Almost worldwide evaluation is a fact of academic life. Students evaluate their teachers, teachers evaluate their students, heads of department appraise their staff; deans appraise heads of department. But the intention of this small effort is to introduce in to the system of our university the evaluation of chairpersons by faculty. The area to be addressed has been largely neglected, but nonetheless warrants university attention.

The current practice of colleague evaluating chairpersons as ordinary members of the academic staff appears at best irrelevant and at worst useless. Chairpersons occupy a position of academic and administrative leadership vital to the departments they head, their faculty, and the university as a whole. The position involves a wide range of duties of enormous significance as laid down in the leadership portfolio.

The appraisal of department heads at issue addresses the executive competence of the elected leaders and servants vis a vis their job description. The proposed evaluation may help heads of department to be more sensitive and responsible about their academic and administrative assignments. It gives them actionable information/feedback from their colleagues about the leadership's weaknesses and strengths.

The evaluative feedback may also assist deans to get a picture of the competence and performance of chairpersons. The information may also be used after serial administration for institutional decisions whether the department needs a new leader well in advance before departmental mismanagement takes disappointing turns.

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A closer bottom up security by staff of their leaders also helps to further democratize university management and thereby contribute to departmental, institutional as well as university wide efforts for continuous improvement in research and scholarship and to realize aspirations to meet the challenges of the twenty first century.

It is hoped faculty understand that this bottom up appraisal is not a threat to smooth departmental a management, but on the contrary and aid to better academic and administrative efficiency.

Attached is a 39 item appraisal form adapted from Moses and Roe (in Webb 1994:153) which Addis Ababa University may adopt to suit the university's departmental realities. For reasons of anonymity the responses to the three open ended questions may be types and sent together with responses to the 36 close ended items to the university's Evaluation Office in an envelop duly sealed.

### **Head of Department Feedback evaluation Form**

#### **Instruction:**

*I am circulating a questionnaire to all departmental academic staff to provide me with feedback on my performance. I will be grateful if you would return your completed questionnaire by (month, date) to the secretary of the educational development unit. The forms will be analyzed by the unit to ensure that anonymity is present.*

*Here are some roles and responsibilities which I perform as head of department. Please indicate how satisfied you feel about my performance in each role, by circling the number which best represents your feeling. If you feel that a particular question does not apply to you, please leave the line blank.*

Scales:1 = *Very satisfied*,  
4 = *Dissatisfied*2 = *Satisfied*,  
5 = *Very dissatisfied*3 = *Undecided*,

No.	Items	Scale				
1	Conducting departmental meetings	1	2	3	4	5
2	Developing long-range plans for the department	1	2	3	4	5
3	Implementing long-range plans for the department	1	2	3	4	5
4	Serving as advocate for the department	1	2	3	4	5
5	Reporting departmental accomplishments to dean and others in the university	1	2	3	4	5
6	Improving and maintaining the department's image and reputation	1	2	3	4	5
7	Proving strong leadership	1	2	3	4	5
8	Being decisive	1	2	3	4	5
9	Delegating some administrative functions to others	1	2	3	4	5
10	Supporting delegated decisions	1	2	3	4	5
11	Initiating and coordinating activities with outside groups	1	2	3	4	5
12	Consulting staff and encouraging them to communicate ideas on departmental matters	1	2	3	4	5
13	Involving staff in the decision - making process of the department	1	2	3	4	5
14	Considering staff members' point of view	1	2	3	4	5
15	Seeking additional university resources	1	2	3	4	5
16	Assigning responsibilities to staff	1	2	3	4	5
17	Evaluating staff performance for promotion	1	2	3	4	5
18	Commending achievement	1	2	3	4	5
19	Dealing effectively with unsatisfactory staff performance	1	2	3	4	5
20	Keeping staff informed of departmental and university plans	1	2	3	4	5
21	Providing staff individually with the opportunity to talk over matters of concern to them	1	2	3	4	5
22	Treating members of staff equally	1	2	3	4	5
23	Supporting staff and maintaining morale	1	2	3	4	5
24	Trusting in the ability of staff	1	2	3	4	5
25	Reducing resolving and preventing conflict among staff members	1	2	3	4	5
26	Advising, counseling and leasing with students	1	2	3	4	5
27	Reducing, resolving and preventing	1	2	3	4	5
28	Stimulating research and publication	1	2	3	4	5
29	Encouraging participation in professional bodies	1	2	3	4	5
30	Encouraging good teaching in the department	1	2	3	4	5
31	Encouraging all staff to perform at a high standard	1	2	3	4	5
32	Taking account of each staff member's special talents and interests	1	2	3	4	5
33	Discussing, with you, the ways in which you	1	2	3	4	5

	might improve performance					
34	Discussing, with you your career ambitions and how they might best be achieved	1	2	3	4	5
35	Generally, taking everything into consideration, how satisfied are you with head of department	1	2	3	4	5
36	What do you consider to be by strengths as head of the department?	1	2	3	4	5
37	In what ways could I make changes to improve my performance as head of department?	1	2	3	4	5
38	Any additional comments?	1	2	3	4	5

### Additional Comments

Could you please write down your feelings about my performance as head of department under the following headings? \_\_\_\_\_

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