Chapter 5
Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the major findings of the study and their relationship to previous studies. First, the findings of the study are discussed in terms of the research questions posed in the study. Next, these findings are interpreted in terms of prior studies. Then, the implications of the study for future practice and future research are discussed. Recommendations for improving leadership capacities and skills of leaders in higher education institutions in Mongolia are offered. Finally, the researcher discusses the limitations of the study and draws some general conclusions.

Findings

The first research question posed in this study examined the extent to which Rectors of higher education institutions in Mongolia exhibit the five leadership practices measured by the LPI. Rectors’ self-rated mean scores ranged between 49.65 and 42.90 and rankings were moderate for all five practices. These findings demonstrate that Rectors rated their skills modestly and may suggest they recognize a need to improve their leadership skills. Observers rated Rectors’ leadership practices lower than Rectors’ self-ratings. Observers’ scores of the five leadership practices for Rectors ranged between 44.64 and 42.36 and rankings varied from moderate to low. These moderate and low scores for Rectors’ leadership practices suggest that followers are not particularly impressed with the skills of their leaders.

In general, scores among the five practices followed similar patterns for self and observers. Enabling others to act was ranked first and modeling the way second by the Rectors’ self-ratings and in the reverse order by Observers of Rectors. The lowest mean score from both methods of rating was for inspiring a shared vision. Encouraging the heart was ranked third and challenging the process was ranked fourth from both groups of raters.

The second research question explored the extent to which the Deans of colleges or faculties at higher education institutions in Mongolia exhibit the five leadership practices measured by the LPI. Deans’ self-rated mean scores for the five leadership practices ranged between 48.05 and 38.80 and rankings were all in the moderate range. Mean scores of observers’ ratings of Deans ranged from 43.01 to 36.51 and rankings were all low. In all cases, observer scores were lower than self scores. The greatest discrepancy between self and observer
mean scores was related to enabling others to act, where the self score was moderate but the observer score was low. These findings suggest that followers are not comfortable with the leadership practices exercised by deans in higher education institutions. This may be explained by the high degree of movement among Deans. Ninety percent (90%) of Deans who participated in the study assumed their positions during last three years. Another explanation for the findings might relate to the Dean’s position itself. Deans in private higher education institutions in Mongolia, particularly in small private schools, are more like mediators between academic units and the Rector or coordinator of teaching activities. Many private schools have only one Dean. This may cause followers to see Deans more as coordinators rather than true leaders.

The third research question in the study investigated the extent to which Department Heads as leaders of academic units in higher education institutions in Mongolia exhibit the five leadership practices measured by the LPI. The Department Heads’ self-rated mean scores ranged from 48.33 to 38.23 and rankings were all moderate or low. The magnitude of Observers’ mean scores ranged from 44.62 to 36.92, and rankings on all five practices were low. These findings suggest that Department Heads in higher education institutions in Mongolia engage in the five key leadership practices at relatively low levels. As with Deans, high rates of changes of Department Heads might be one reason for their low rankings. Turnover of Department Heads is quite frequent in Mongolia. For example, three fourths of Department Heads who participated in the study entered their office during last three years. Additionally, Department Heads do not determine pay raises for faculty and do not have authority to allocate financial resources in general. This lack of authority may render them less powerful as leaders in their own eyes and in the eyes of their followers.

The fourth research question explored differences in leadership practices among Rectors, Deans, and Department Heads. Statistical tests revealed that there were no significant differences between self-rated mean scores of the five key leadership practices among Rectors, Deans, and Department Heads. From the point of view of leaders, ratings of leadership practices did not differ according to level of authority. However, statistical tests that compared observers’ mean scores of the five leadership practices revealed significant differences in two leadership practices.
The mean score of Rectors in challenging the process was higher than mean score for Department Heads’ on this same dimension. According to observers’ assessments, as CEO of an entire institution, Rectors were more visionary, more frequently sought challenging opportunities, more often looked to outside organizations for ways to improve, and took more risks when compared to Department Heads. Faculty members thought that their Department Heads generally act more like line supervisors but not leaders who seek new opportunities and possibilities to change the status quo in the department.

Multiple comparisons revealed that the mean score of Rectors in inspiring a shared vision was higher than the mean score for Deans on this dimension. In terms of inspiring a shared vision, Rectors talked about the future frequently and positively, and asked subordinates to share their ideas about the future more often than Deans did. One possible explanation for this finding that Rectors were more visionary and more challenging may be because of the higher level of their position.

The next research question posed in the study investigated differences between LPI-Self and LPI-Observer scores among leaders of Mongolian higher education institutions. Statistical tests revealed that there were significant differences in some of leadership practices in all four groups of leaders.

In the group of all leaders, there were significant differences in leadership practices with regard to enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart. The discrepancies between self ratings and observer ratings in decreasing order were from the practice of enabling through encouraging to modeling. It is interesting to note that although these three practices were scored higher than the other two practices by both methods of rating, differences between self perceptions and observers evaluations were extensive on the three most highly rated practices.

In the group of Rectors, there were significant differences between self perceptions and observers ratings in the practice of enabling others. Rectors rated themselves in this dimension higher than their followers. One possible explanation might be the fact that with democratic changes in society, Rectors started to act in more democratic ways through giving more freedom to people, supporting individuals’ decisions, and listening to diverse views. The new environment in Mongolia is incomparable in terms of legal, political, and economic
environments. Contemporary Rectors work in very different environments than did their predecessors. That may explain Rectors’ self perceptions about enabling others to act being higher than observers’ evaluations of them on this dimension.

In the group of Deans, statistical tests revealed significant differences between self rated scores and observer rated scores in the practices of enabling, encouraging, and modeling the way. The nature of the Deanship position in Mongolian higher education institutions may be the major reason for these differences. Deans might believe that the closeness of their professional relationships with Departments and faculty members compensate for their lack of financial authority. Because of this, Deans may have scored themselves higher in practices of enabling, encouraging, and modeling. In turn, Department Heads and faculty members, as followers, may expect more tangible, effective, and frequent actions from Deans as their leaders.

In the group of Department Heads, there were significant differences between self perceptions and observers’ evaluations in enabling others to act. Currently, there is no formal office hour policy in Departments of public institutions because the economic situation in the country does not allow it. As for the private institutions, well known people from outside organizations usually serve as Department Heads. Department Heads in higher education institutions in Mongolia are not full-time administrators in the strict sense. They teach classes and even share offices with their faculty members. Department Heads in this situation do not engage in developing cooperative relationships among members of the Department and in listening to different points of views. This might be the major explanation for this difference. Significant differences between self perceptions and observers’ assessments across all the groups were only related to the practice of enabling others to act. One explanation of this finding may be the transitional character of society itself. At present, every organization in Mongolia is changing from being commanded to being led by leader. Leaders are now trying to develop cooperative relationships instead of command relationships. Leaders are trying to treat people with dignity and respect instead of assuming respect based on their position. They are trying to listen to people instead of directing people and to let people do their work instead of interfering with that work. Since the beginning of democratic changes in the country, ten years have passed and leaders have changed. But there is room for improvement in terms of enabling others to act.
The sixth research question explored differences in leadership practices employed by leaders in public and private institutions of higher education in Mongolia. In terms of self scores, all leaders at both types of institutions rated themselves similarly except on one dimension. The t-tests revealed a significant difference in the practice of inspiring a shared vision. Leaders at private institutions rated themselves lower in terms of inspiring. This may be explained by the fact that they are so busy with building up the institution, improving resources, creating conditions conducive for normal functioning for the school, and other entrepreneurial activities. Many private institutions face problems in financial, material, and information resources.

In terms of observers’ scores, statistical tests revealed significant differences between leaders of public and private higher education institutions in all five leadership practices. According to followers’ assessments, leaders at private institutions were much less competent leaders than leaders in public institutions. The main reason for these discrepancies may be that private higher education institutions are new establishments in Mongolia and do not have inherited traditions. Many private schools are struggling for survival at this time. In addition, senior and mid-level leaders in private schools are primarily entrepreneurs who may not have traditional academic backgrounds. As a result, they might be rated lower by their subordinates in terms of their leadership skills.

The final research question investigated differences in leadership practices between leaders who were appointed to the leadership position after the advent of democracy in 1996, leaders who were appointed between 1990 and 1996 when there was a coalition government, and leaders who started their tenure during socialist time (pre-1990). Statistical analyses did not reveal any significant differences between leaders appointed in different eras (see Table 11). These findings suggest that leaders in higher education institutions are learning about leadership practices by trial and error during this societal transition from a socialist system to a democratic system. The current transitional situation in the country may be the main reason why leaders in higher education in Mongolia did not differ based on date of appointment.

Relationship of the Findings to Previous Studies

It is interesting to examine the findings of this study in light of previous research on leadership. The findings may be divided into two groups depending on whether they support or
contradict results of previous studies. The following findings of this study supported results of previous studies.

The first finding that supported previous studies was the LPI-S ratings in relation to LPI-O ratings. Leaders in higher education institutions in Mongolia rated themselves consistently higher than their observers. Mean scores of LPI-Self ratings were higher than mean scores of LPI-Observer ratings for all three categories of leaders (Rectors, Deans, and Department Heads) on all five leadership practices. There may be several explanations for this pattern. Perhaps the formal authority entrusted to the position enables leaders to think about their leadership practices more optimistically. Additionally, followers are usually more critical of leaders. Talking about the sense of loneliness after assuming the office of university president, Kerr (1995) noted that close friends became just friends, friends became acquaintances, acquaintances became critics, and critics became enemies. Such shifts are also noticeable in Mongolian institutions, which may explain why subordinates rate their leaders less favorably than leaders rate themselves.

One possible reason has to do with how leaders obtained their positions. Many leaders in public higher education entered their leadership positions on the basis of ruling party affiliation without serious consideration of their academic achievements or leadership capacities. This may have been perceived negatively on the part of some followers. Such followers might have rated their leaders’ practices lower.

Another reason for the discrepancy between LPI-S and LPI-O scores may be the varying degree of closeness between leader and subordinates. Observers who are closer to their leaders may expect more effective leadership and therefore evaluated their leaders more harshly. Those who are not close to the leader may have rated him or her based on general attitudes toward the leader. The literature review suggested that higher self ratings were quite common across studies that used both LPI-Self and LPI-Observer. For example, Riley’s (1991) study on superintendents’ leadership practices revealed that the superintendents’ self scores were consistently higher than those reported by their principals (observers). Plowman’s (1991) study on perceptions of presidential leadership behavior and institutional environment by presidents and vice-presidents of selected four-year colleges and universities in Florida showed that the
presidents’ perceptions of their leadership practices were all significantly higher than the perceptions of their administrative team members.

A second finding that supported previous studies was patterns of scores on the five key leadership practices. The pattern of scores on the five key leadership practices were similar for all categories of leaders in higher education institutions in Mongolia. This pattern from highest to lowest was: (1) enabling the others to act; (2) modeling the way; (3) encouraging the heart; (4) challenging the process; and (5) inspiring a shared vision. As for the order of LPI-Observer mean scores, there were minor differences. In sum, leaders in higher education institutions in Mongolia more frequently engaged in behaviors related to enabling, modeling, and encouraging and less frequently engaged in leadership practices related to challenging and inspiring. A similar pattern was found by Brown (1997) in his study of public college and university presidential perceptions of effective leadership practices. According to Brown, American public college and university presidents’ scores ranked from highest to lowest were: (1) enabling others to act; (2) encouraging the heart; (3) modeling the way; (4) inspiring a shared vision; and (5) challenging the way. The first three were more frequently practiced and the last two less frequently practiced by American leaders.

The third finding that supports results of previous research is related to years of service of leaders. This study revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between self-scores of leaders appointed during different times. Brown’s (1997) analyses showed that no significant difference was found between the perceptions of leadership practices among college and university presidents regarding years of experience. In sum, years in office or experience do not influence leaders’ self-perceptions of leadership practices. This may suggest that leaders need to periodically complete the LPI-Self to see if their leadership skills on the five practices have changed and to make plans for developing leadership practices in the future.

The fourth finding that confirmed previous research is related to judgments about the transformational or transactional character of leadership based on LPI scores. Fields and Herold (1997) used the LPI-Observer to measure transformational and transactional leadership. To do this, they constructed three alternative second-order models. One model related LPI dimensions to transformational and transactional concepts according to the nature of items that make up the dimension. Results of their study showed that one model associates two LPI dimensions.
(challenging and inspiring) with transformational leadership, one dimension (enabling) with transactional leadership, and two dimensions (modeling and encouraging) with both types of leadership. That is, higher scores on challenging and inspiring practices along with higher scores on encouraging and modeling, renders a leader more transformational. On the contrary, higher scores on enabling combined with high scores on modeling and encouraging, renders a leader more transactional. In this study, the two most important practices of transformational leaders, namely challenging the process and inspiring a shared vision were ranked in fourth and fifth place among the five leadership practices of Mongolian higher education leaders. This fact suggests that leadership in higher education in Mongolia has a predominantly transactional character. But it is desirable that all leaders, especially senior leaders, possess the characteristics of transformational leadership in a transitional country like Mongolia.

One finding that did not support previous studies was that both self perceptions and followers’ ratings of the five leadership practices were moderate and low. It was striking that no one group of leaders (Rectors, Deans, and Department Heads) were rated as high in terms of their leadership practices even by their own self-assessments. Self-rated rankings of all leaders for all the five leadership practices were moderate, while observers’ ratings of leaders were moderate or low. Brown’s (1997) study of American university and college presidents showed results that ranged between high moderate and high on the normative scale. Plowman (1991) noted that presidents of colleges and universities in Florida rated themselves in the 70th percentile or above in the normative LPI profile (high level). One explanation for this discrepancy from previous research might relate to the current transition in Mongolia from a socialist system where everyone in the chain of command was expected to follow directions from the top to a democratic social system where leaders are chosen for their leadership abilities. Mongolian leaders are now learning through their first achievements and mistakes. This might explain why their overall ratings were only moderate or low. Another reason that might explain this departure from previous studies might relate to the frequent changes of leaders. Among leaders who participated in this study, 71.2% had been appointed to their office during the past three years. There has been a particularly extensive amount of movement among Deans and Department Heads. Ninety percent (90%) of Deans, 75% of Department Heads, 45% of Rectors in the sample of leaders took office during the past three years. As a result, they are relatively
inexperienced leaders and this may explain the lower overall ratings they gave themselves and that observers assigned to them.

The next reason to explain these low ratings has to do with how functions, duties, and responsibilities of leaders at institutions are formally approved and articulated to members of an organization. Currently, leaders in higher education institutions in Mongolia do not have clear job descriptions. Accordingly, subordinates do not know what to expect from their leaders. This is inherited from the socialist system. In the socialist system, leaders had general directions about their duties that were reflected in the organization. Leaders were responsible for the whole organization or organizational unit, for its achievement and failures. They devoted all their energy and skills to fulfill the tasks that were handed down from higher level authorities. They were evaluated on the basis of whether they achieved these tasks, not on how they achieved them. This situation routinely continues to exist at higher education institutions today.

Implications for the Future Practice and Future Research

This study had implications for both future practice and future research. This study might be beneficial for higher education leaders in Mongolia in terms of informing them of their current leadership practices. The results of the study enabled Rectors, Deans, and Department Heads of higher education institutions in Mongolia to look at their leadership skills. Leaders might use the results to establish leadership development goals because leadership development is a learnable process (Kouzes & Posner, 1997).

This study revealed not only a general need for higher education leaders to improve their leadership skills but identified specific skills through needs on each of the five key leadership practices. The results of the study also showed these needs for improvement of leadership practices were felt by the leaders themselves and by their followers. In addition, there were both environmental pressures dictated by the transition and environmental stimuli for acquiring leadership practices that work in higher education settings in democratic countries.

To improve leadership skills of higher education leaders in Mongolia, it will be imperative to streamline functions, duties and responsibilities of leaders at all levels (Rectors, Vice-Rectors, Deans, and Department Heads). In addition to this, these functions, duties and responsibilities should be communicated properly to the constituents in a comprehensive and
timely manner. Clear communication of roles and duties of leaders will make them accountable to upper-level leaders and followers.

Higher education leaders in Mongolia have to learn while they are leading their institutions or units and implementing changes and reforms. That is a requirement of the current times in Mongolia. Beer (1999) noted that leading, changing, and learning are synonymous. According to him, strategic change can be motivated by a carefully designed action process that confronts the fit between strategy, organization, and leadership behavior (Beer, 1999, p.128).

Learning to lead might be achieved through both formal training in classrooms and informal training or self-education. Learning to lead others effectively and improving leadership practices may be conducted through formal training of leaders. The literature on leadership shows that leadership development training is becoming an important part of staff development in organizations (Komaki, 1998). All institutions and development projects in Mongolia, including higher education, have leadership development components. These projects are financed by international organizations as well as with loans from international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. Development activities include training activities designed for leaders, study tours to foreign universities and colleges, participation in short-term courses, and seminars abroad and in the country. These courses are usually specifically tailored to the needs of Mongolian higher education and are conducted by well known experts who have experience in higher education systems in former socialist countries. Many of these training courses are designed after pilot studies conducted by foreign experts in the country. The demographic survey for this study showed that 35% (n=7) of Rectors, 15% (n=3) of Deans, and 15% (n= 6) of Department Heads who participated in this study took courses or participated in seminars conducted during the last four years. These small percentages of participants might be connected with the high rate of change among academic leaders in Mongolia, particularly among Deans and Department Heads. This suggests that stability of leaders in positions is important. Once they are appointed to the leadership position and take formal training courses, leaders should have enough time to implement the knowledge and expertise they acquire through training.

Another way of improving leadership practices might be the organization of leadership development training in the form of different workshops and seminars within an
organization. Each institution or the consortia of institutions could initiate training seminars and workshops for their leaders. Each Rector can start leadership development workshops for his or her team leaders with facilitation by an outside expert. Deans may start the same kind of leadership development seminars with their Department Heads. To increase the professional level of these kinds of training seminars and workshops, foreign experts could be invited to serve as facilitators.

There are several recommendations with regard to topics of leadership development seminars and workshops suggested by different authors (Kouzes & Posner, 1997; Napolitano & Henderson, 1998). The purpose of these topics is to promote new skills necessary for effective leadership. For example, these topics may include: process restructuring or reengineering; team building; improvement of listening skills; creative problem solving; strategic planning; development of interpersonal-communication skills; effective presentation; negotiation skills; organizational culture and values; and motivation of people. It is important that during training courses or seminars participants have time to practice and experiment through different forms of training such as role plays, interpersonal communication exercises, and observation of others in action. Every leadership development seminar should be evaluated by participants in terms of what seminars should be discontinued, continued, or offered more frequently. Such evaluations will be useful for revising and improving the next training session. Thus, formal training of leaders through a variety of methods would increase their knowledge about leadership theory and practices and energize them for future self-development and continuous self-learning.

If Rectors, Deans, and Department Heads want to be effective, respected, and admired leaders at their institutions, they could establish informal clubs or circles for exchanges of ideas and practices in the field of leadership. These clubs, consisting of volunteers, might became places of mutual learning, stimulating discussions about books they read, studies that were conducted or any other leadership topics. For example, each of the five leadership practices could serve as the topic of two or three meetings. The effectiveness of these kinds of informal learning organizations depends on the commitment of people involved, the regularity of meetings, the preparation for discussions, and the active involvement of participants.

One type of self-learning is reading and analyzing books on leadership by leaders themselves who might attempt to apply acquired knowledge to improve their leadership skills. It
is highly recommended that leaders in higher education read the books and monographs written by well known authors around the world on leadership topics. Such books include The One Minute Manager (Blanchard & Johnson, 1982); In Search of Excellence (Peters & Waterman, 1982); The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (Covey, 1989); and The Leadership Challenge (Kouzes & Posner, 1997). Studying these and other books on leadership would be useful for exposing leaders to previously unknown ideas and behaviors. Reading might prompt them to initiate new changes at their institutions. Reading biographies of famous leaders in industry, business, education, and politics might also be valuable and instructive for leaders. Each leader should have a list of recommended literature on leadership development and leadership practices and a collection of leadership books. They might share books with colleagues who have other sets of books. Leaders are recommended to read about leadership just as they read about their academic field or research interests.

Learning and improving by doing or acting is another source of leadership development. Many books and monographs have been written on this aspect of leadership development. (Conger, Spreitzer, & Lawler, 1999; Gilmore, 1988; Langley, Nolan, Nolan, Norman, & Provost, 1996). They contain recommendations and examples of effective applications.

Langley and associates (1996) have developed a model for improvement called the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle. This model is based on a trial-and-learning approach to improvement. The PDSA cycle would enable leaders to turn the ideas into action and connect action to learning. The thrust of this model is to find answers to three basic questions: (1) what I am trying to accomplish?; (2) how will I know that a change is improvement?; and (3) what changes can I make that will result in improvement? (Langley & Associates, 1999).

This model for improvement is a comprehensive and straightforward model that could lead to incremental improvements. This model might also be applicable for higher education leaders in Mongolia for both improving their leadership practices and learning about leadership by doing. Application of this model in leadership improvement would require that each leader (Rector, Dean, and Department Head) develop an individual PDSA cycle with particular developmental aims. Every PDSA cycle would start with statement of the particular leadership practice development aim on each of the five leadership practices: what is leader going to achieve. This is the planning step. Next, in the doing step, the leader should choose the change
activity from many alternatives and should carry out this change. During this period the leader would document results that occurred as a result of this change. Then, in the study step, comparing data to initial predictions, the leader can summarize the learning. This will reveal whether the change led to improvement. Finally, in the action step, the leader may make modifications depending on the results of the study step and continue to carry out changes.

Leaders who wish to use this model need to have an individual sheet for each aim or each PDSA cycle with four heading: Plan, Do, Study, and Action. Since use of this model is a cyclical action-learning and action research process, those who are committed to this method should collect data and analyze them. For example, leaders should collect data about how many people come to the leader’s office and share their dream with the leader or make new suggestions. Outcomes of every change act should be collected in the form of data and treated to analyses. Additionally, leaders need to observe results, interview participants, and analyze data to carry out changes designed for each aim.

Some suggestions of leadership development objectives might be useful for higher education leaders in Mongolia in their attempts to improve leadership practices. These examples are listed by each of the five practices. To improve practice of challenging the process, a leader might do the following things and judge whether they resulted in changes and what was learned:

1. Make several proposals to change existing policy, rules, and procedures after reviewing them;
2. Conduct extensive interviews with subordinates about what irritates them and change practice based on their responses;
3. Introduce new faculty evaluation practices based on teaching, research productivity and service activities;
4. Suggest and experiment with a new faculty and staff contract system. At present, faculty and staff can be hired and fired at will and they have not protection from unreasonable employment demands.
5. Experiment with the effective use of institutional buildings and facilities. At present, facilities are not used almost at all for two months during the summer. More efficient use of facilities is needed.
6. Recommend and introduce new forms of library and communication services that would meet demands of faculty and students.

To improve the practice of inspiring a shared vision, leaders might initiate the following activities:

1. Work with other in the unit or department to create an image of the institution in four to five years and formulate its niche in the system of higher education in the country;
2. Involve others in formulating or rewriting the mission statement, strategic objectives and value system of the institution, college or faculty, and department as a result of a series of intensive discussions with the management team or colleagues;
3. Facilitate the process to communicate new or newly formulated mission statements, strategic objectives, and value systems of the organization with conviction to the audience of followers with careful explanations of every word or expression. These should be articulated on every possible occasion, through media and institutional press;
4. Delegate some of authority entrusted to the leader’s position to the followers, which will empower them.

To improve the practice of enabling others to act, leaders may start to exercise the following things:

1. Make frequent visits to colleges by Rectors, to Departments by Deans, and to offices of faculty members by Department Heads;
2. Invite and encourage subordinates to come to the office of the leader and share their opinions and dreams;
3. Spend lunch time with faculty members over conversations;
4. Plan and conduct a series of faculty development seminars on important topics and issues such as how to increase students’ academic engagement, how to use different instructional methods, and what are the benefits of using case study methods and how they work.
5. Support and initiate content-based learning techniques of English for non-English faculty.

To improve the practice of modeling the way, leaders need to engage in the following activities:
1. Introduce deadlines for milestone activities and follow through;
2. Make visible the achievements of an entire institution, college, Department, and faculty members through newsletters and other media;
3. Show leaders’ consistent commitment to organizational values by a number of selected activities. For example, if the organization values open communication, the leader can model such behavior by giving public speeches.

To improve the practice of encouraging the heart, leaders should do the following new things:

1. Review and redesign the entire reward system used at the institution based on opinions of organizational members and with participation of faculty and staff representatives;
2. Copy some forms of celebrity exercised at higher education institutions in democratic countries such as naming university buildings after key scholars’ names, celebrating outstanding teachers and researchers of the year, organizing special luncheons and dinners with faculty members on special occasions, and publicizing nationally recognized achievements of faculty members and staff;
3. Improve leaders’ articulation skills so they can publicly express appreciation to people whose contributions to the organization are remarkable.

This list can include many other creative activities that would foster leadership capabilities of those who are in leadership positions and are genuinely committed to improvement.

Staff at the Ministry of Education of Mongolia also might benefit from the results of this study. The findings of the study provided staff at the Ministry with a picture of leadership capabilities in the higher education sector. The Ministry might use the results of the study to design types of leadership development training that are needed. For example, since challenging the process and inspiring a shared vision were the lowest rated practices of leaders, the Ministry might initiate a series of special seminars for senior leaders at higher education institutions (Rectors, Vice-Rectors, Deans) on topics such as team building, strategic planning, and development of creative thinking skills. These seminars would be designed to strengthen leadership practices and could be conducted by visiting consultants. Through publication of the best experiences of leaders in higher education, the Ministry could facilitate the dissemination of
best practices among educational leaders. The Ministry also might use the LPI formally as a part of reviewing leaders’ performance. The Ministry could use this kind of assessment of leadership practices in an institutional accreditation process that needs to be developed and introduced in the near future. The Ministry in cooperation with the Institute of Administration and Management Development and Government of Mongolia could form a national pool of experts in the field of management and leadership. This group might publish handbooks on leadership development skills or leadership improvement guides for use by educational leaders at all levels. The Ministry also consider replicating the present study in the future to see if leadership development activities initiated by the Ministry and self-development efforts by the leaders lead to higher scores on the LPI. In addition, the Ministry could initiate programs that promote international study for higher education leaders so that they might learn from the experiences of their colleagues in foreign countries.

Faculty members, staff, and students in higher education institutions might also benefit from the results of this study. The study might provide them with information about leadership measurement and practices. The findings might enable potential faculty members, staff, and students to design their career development plans to learn leadership practices. They might accomplish this through learning by doing and through training. They could explore the same methods of training. They could use and experiment with acquired knowledge on leadership in managing research project teams, interacting with students and colleagues, and fulfilling their duties in professional and other organizations.

The study also has implications for the future research. This study served as an exploratory analysis of leadership practices of higher education leaders. The researcher investigated the leadership practices exhibited by leaders in higher education institutions in Mongolia at a single point in time. To pursue further study of higher education leadership, other researchers might choose to do a longitudinal study of leaders to explore whether there are changes in leadership practices over time and the nature of those changes.

Other researchers could use the same methodology employed in this study in other settings. The methodology can be used to assess leadership practices in elementary or secondary school systems or government agencies. Researchers could also use the instrument to reveal leadership practices in many other settings such as industry, business, and transportation.
Comparison of LPI-Self and LPI-Observer scores across different sectors might reveal patterns of leadership practices specific to the current transitional situation in Mongolia.

The present study employed one instrument to measure the extent to which leaders engaged in leadership practices. Other researchers could use alternate leadership instruments designed to evaluate leadership from different perspectives. For example, one could use LMX 7 (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975) to assess leadership in terms of the development of relationships between leaders and subordinates. Other scholars could use the LBDQ (Stogdill, 1963) to assess leadership practices through initiating structure and consideration. Another intriguing approach might involve creating models based on two or more leadership instruments and approaches.

In sum, this study enables future researchers to pursue further study on leadership by altering the setting, the design, the methodology or the sample. Such studies would broaden the literature available about leadership in Mongolia.

Limitations of the Study

As with any study, there were limitations. The first related to the adequacy of the instrument. The LPI was designed to measure leadership in western organizations. It is possible that the unique characteristics of Mongolian institutions of higher education could not be reasonably measured accordingly to western standards. If so, the results might have been skewed. Also it is possible that there are cultural/historical issues that may have influenced responses, so low scores may be due to cultural/historical differences, not necessarily leadership differences.

The next limitation related to sampling. A sample of 20 higher education institutions out of 62 institutions in the country was involved in this study. To ensure representation of higher education system in Mongolia, the researcher purposefully selected 10 institutions from each type of public and private institutions that would portrays the current higher education system. In addition to the Rector, three leaders and 10 faculty members were selected randomly from each institution for participation in this study. Deans of only one college or faculty, two Departments Heads, and only five faculty members from each of these Departments were involved in the study. Had other institutions been selected for the study, the results may have differed. Likewise, had other leaders or followers at the selected institutions participated in the study, the results might have been different. This is not to say that the sample in the study was not valid. It is
simply important to note that when a sample is selected purposefully rather than randomly, there are potential limitations to that sample.

It is also important to note that potential limitation imposed by the instrument employed in the study. No data were available on the types of individuals included in the sample upon which the normative scales were developed. It is possible that this normative sample included business and government leaders but not leaders from higher education. If that occurred, it might be unreasonable to draw conclusions about scores of higher education leaders on the LPI.

A final limitation is related to how candid the respondents were. To eliminate cautious attitudes of participants, the researcher explained purpose of the study and pointed out that the statements were designed to measure the frequencies of engagement in certain leadership practices. Additionally, all participants were acquainted with the Informed Consent for Participants of Investigative Projects, signed this document and kept one copy for their records. The fact that LPI-Self mean scores were higher than LPI-Observer mean scores in all practices for all leader groups suggested to some degree that answers were candid. But there are always demerits with self-reported data. If respondents were less candid, the results might be skewed.

Conclusion

This study differed from most of the related research on higher education in three ways. First, this study focused on leaders in higher education institutions in a transitional country of Asia. Second, previous studies primarily concentrated on leaders from one sector (public v. private) or one type of post-secondary institutions (two-year, four-year, and research universities and colleges). This study encompassed samples from both public and private higher education institutions representing different types (universities, specialized institutions, and professional schools). Third, this study employed both forms of Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) instrument: the LPI-Self and the LPI-Observer. All leaders (Rectors, Deans, and Department Heads) completed an LPI-Self on themselves and all leaders were evaluated by all levels of followers at the institution including faculty members.

The results revealed that no group of higher education leaders in Mongolia were rated at the “high” level in terms of their practices, even by their own self-assessment. Overall, the ratings on all five leadership practices of higher education leaders in Mongolia were lower than those of college and university leaders in the United States. Additionally, the ratings of followers
on the practices of their leaders were significantly lower than self-ratings of the leaders themselves in a number of areas. One possible explanation for the findings might be the fact that leaders in higher education institutions in Mongolia are learning about leadership practices by trial and error during the country’s transition from a socialist system to a democratic system.

The findings of this study suggest that the development of leadership skills is a pressing concern for leaders of higher education in Mongolia. Leadership development programs are clearly needed. Formal and informal learning opportunities for higher education leaders ought to be developed. Only when leadership development opportunities are provided can leadership in higher education in Mongolia be improved.