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In Search of Academic Excellence By Becoming An Effective Leader: A Study of Academic Leadership in Higher Education

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Abstract - From the beginning of time, leadership has been one of the most sought after feature in human civilization. A strong leader makes the difference between simple existence and excellence. They inspired others, create vision among the followers, communicate what they want to communicate, show openness, and listen what their followers want to say. These people not only create actual value in others, but also change the society in a holistic way. Now, it is becoming a passion to get an authentic, effective leader in higher educational sector, where students do not want to see their teacher as a teacher only rather they ask for something more.

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In Search of Academic Excellence By Becoming An Effective Leader: A Study of Academic Leadership in Higher Education

Ireen Akhter ^α & Sharif Mahmudul Haque ^σ

Abstract - From the beginning of time, leadership has been one of the most sought after feature in human civilization. A strong leader makes the difference between simple existence and excellence. They inspired others, create vision among the followers, communicate what they want to communicate, show openness, and listen what their followers want to say. These people not only create actual value in others, but also change the society in a holistic way. Now, it is becoming a passion to get an authentic, effective leader in higher educational sector, where students do not want to see their teacher as a teacher only rather they ask for something more.

The objective of this research was to identify a number of attributes/qualities of a teacher perceived as most important by students at tertiary level. These attributes/qualities will make him a leader of a group of followers, a group of students, which then make him an excellent teacher. Data of 280 students were assimilated to come to the findings. The authors found 15 most important qualities identified by students among 111 qualities identified by the authors, which should be poses by all teachers to be a good leader. As leadership is not science, part of social science, there is further scope for research in private tertiary level, as well as other educational sector to make it more authenticate.

Keywords : Academic Leader, Leadership, Qualities, Attributes.

I. INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of time, leadership has been one of the most sought after feature in human civilization. Human beings seek dynamic, revolutionary, confident, and passionate leaders. A strong leader makes the difference between simple existence and excellence. A capable leader carries a nation to unimaginable heights (Akhter, et al. 2005).

Education is essential for the future of society, and our role in this future is that of competent leaders of education (Dale, 2011). Now, it is becoming a passion to get an effective leader in education sector. And it is becoming more and more important in tertiary education where students do not want to see their teachers as a teacher only rather they ask for something more. When

a student enter in higher education at the age of 18 s/he desire to have good person(s) besides them who will act not only as a teacher but also as a leader, as a mentor. Sometimes they will give feeling of their parents as some of them stay away from their parents. Buchen (2000) argues that the only leadership that will make a difference is that of teachers. Today, an increasing number of colleges and universities worry about students' development of values and habits of mind. Whether designated leaders or not, they develop a sense of personal commitment, move beyond themselves to relationships with others in ways that galvanize their commitment to a common purpose (Larry and Jon, 2008). This article mainly tried to find out the most important qualities of a teacher by which s/he is consider as an excellent teacher as well as an effective, authentic leader to her/his followers, a group of students, who again become a leader in her or his own areas in future.

II. OBJECTIVES

To gain knowledge about the leadership qualities of an effective teacher at tertiary level. In particular, to find out the leadership qualities/traits those are most important for a teacher from in the eyes of students besides excellence in teaching, which will make him an effective leader. In specific, to find out-

- a list of qualities, which are normally posses by leaders.
- a list of leadership qualities, which are most important for an effective teacher.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

a) Data Collection Method

This is mostly an explorative study. Both primary and secondary data have been used for the purpose of this study. The authors first prepare a list of qualities (111) normally posses by leaders. This list (Table 2) was developed after rigorous exploration of different books, journals, publications, and web based papers. Then with the help of academicians, the author listed 30 (Annexure-II) most important and related qualities of a teacher at tertiary level from those 111 qualities. In this case the authors conducted a focus group discussion with few faculty members of tertiary level. To collect

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primary data, a group of students (280) were asked to identify 15 most important qualities (from those 30 qualities) which should be possessed by academicians when they perform their regular activities. For the purpose of this research, the study only focused on the leadership qualities of a teacher.

b) Sampling Plan and Sample Size

Sampling Plan and Sample Size: A stratified random sampling survey was adopted for selecting students from different institutes/departments at masters' level. It is assumed that the result will be more accurate as the students of master's level are quite mature and stable. 280 students were selected randomly from the following 7 institutes/departments of Jahangirnagar University:

Table 1 : Name of Institute/Departments and number of students interviewed:

Sl.	Institutes/ Departments	Students Interviewed	% of Sample
i.	Anthropology	40	14.29
ii.	Archeology	40	14.29
iii.	Economics	40	14.29
iv.	Geography and Environment	40	14.29
v.	Govt. and Politics	40	14.29
vi.	Institute of Business Administration	40	14.29
vii.	Statistics	40	14.29
	TOTAL	280	100.0

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

a) What is Leadership

The desire to understand, define, and explain the essence of leadership has interested researchers and scholars for most of the twentieth century. Though thousands of studies have been published in the last several decades alone, the term "leadership" did not come into usage until the late 19th Century. The words "lead" and "leader" have a much longer history, however, they usually referred only to authority figures (Curtis, 1998). The topic of breakthrough leadership was the subject of the first special issue in the Harvard Business Review's seventy-nine year history (Bowman & Garten, 2008). Today, scholars discuss the basic nature of leadership in terms of the "interaction" among the people involved in the process: both leaders and followers (Rost, 1991). In truth, leadership exists as part of a duality: Leaders forge and sustain relationships with followers (Goffee & Jones, 2001) who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes (Curtis, 1998)

and the essence of leadership is not the leader, but the relationship (Rost, 1993). Rost's (1991) contemporary definition is composed of four basic components, each of which must be present if a particular relationship is to be called leadership. (1) if it is based on multidirectional influence, not based on authority; (2) both leaders and followers are doing leadership; (3) leaders and followers intend real changes; and (4) the changes reflect their mutual purposes.

Leadership is an important dimension of management whose presence and existence depends on several skills of a group of people (Bennett and Anderson, 2003). Leadership excellence requires being in touch with one's mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects including one's values, talents, personality, and self-image (Nahavandi, 2000), passions (Vicere & Fulmer, 1997), intellect, competencies, personal aspirations, and family and community life (McCauley, Moxley, & Velsor, 1998). Effective leaders understand themselves, learn to set personal goals, and work to achieve those goals through their self-selected plans and abilities (Kouzes & Posner, 1993).

b) What should be held by a Leader

Leadership is a process to develop one as a leader. This happens by personal development which discovers who we are, as well as what skills we possess (Bennis, 1989). Not all leadership roles are fixed. Someone might act as a mentor one week and then assume the role of innovator with a unique proposal the following week (Gabriel, 2005). Authentic leaders are more agile in their behavior, more effective in decision making, clearer about motivations and expectations of others, and more flexible in adjusting to new situations (Lee & King, 2001). Again, authentic leaders see themselves as stewards of the assets they inherit and servants of all their stakeholders (George, 2003).

Certain skills are necessary in order to remain authentic as a leader which makes them more flexible and confident in their approaches to goal achievement (Lee & King, 2001). Like skills traits are also important for leadership. According to Davis and Newstrom (2003) some common leadership traits are: visionary, experts and knowledgeable, mentors, patient, organizer, charisma, thinkers, listeners, sensors, good communicator, and self-confidence.

Kouzes and Posner (2007) developed a survey name 'The leadership practices inventory' that asked people which, of a list are common characteristics of leaders. The results of the study showed that people preferred characteristics, such as honest, forward-looking, competent, inspiring, intelligent, fair-minded, broad-minded, supportive, straightforward, dependable, cooperative, determined, imaginative, ambitious, courageous, caring, mature, loyal, self-controlled, and independent.

In recent years the new competencies of leadership such as sense making, ability to deliver, inter organizational representation, has been known as one of the effective leadership qualities. It is composed of four dimensions: ideal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Storey, 2004). Now, a good number of educational institutes giving increasing importance on leadership learning. A recent study by Howe and Freeman (1997) shows that an increasing number of institutions of higher learning are now offering programs that prepare students for leadership.

c) *What qualities should be hold by a Teacher*

Much has been written over the years about the centrality and importance of 'academic leadership' to the success of higher education (Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education Management, 1995). Although the options for leadership are varied, there are a number of qualities that leaders have in common. Many of these characteristics are seen in effective teachers, which might be why people gravitate toward them and why they seek leadership positions. In some texts (e.g., Leaming, 1998; Gmelch & Miskin, 1993; Hecht, et al., 1999) the term 'academic leadership' has been used to describe a collection of tasks or functions performed by individuals appointed to formal positions of responsibility within universities. In other texts, the term is used to describe the qualities or characteristics of particular individuals who are recognized by others as being academic leaders (e.g., Fisher & Koch, 1996; Ramsden, 1998). In yet others, the term is used to describe anyone who holds an academic appointment. In such texts (e.g., Trowler, 1998; Taylor, 1999), all academics are considered to be academic leaders as they are assumed to be at the forefront of their discipline, and active in the definition of future directions and strategies within their academic programs and research.

During a brainstorming exercise in the Department of Education at Winona State, faculty members identified more than fifty discrete roles and leadership demands central to key aspects of the Department's daily operations (Bowman, 2002). Rice (2003) in a meta-analysis focused on empirical studies of teacher quality and qualifications, and found five broad categories of teacher attributes that appear to contribute to teacher quality: (i) experience, (ii) preparation programs and degrees, (iii) type of certification, (iv) coursework taken in preparation for the profession, and (v) teachers' own test scores. Cruickshank, Jenkins & Metcalf (2003) when define effective teaching include caring, supportive, concerned about the welfare of students, knowledgeable about their subject matter, able to get along with parents and genuinely excited about the work that they do.

According to Gabriel (2005) the following are some common traits found in the teachers: principled,

honest and ethical, organized, perceptive, empathetic and supportive, altruistic, accessible, resourceful, fair, accepting, vulnerable, forward-thinking, global, decisive and incisive, and intelligent. Glenda (2008) in his writing Characteristics of a good teacher identified seven characteristics to have to be a good teacher. These are communicates knowledge, flexibility and tolerance, sense of detachment, creativity and humor, listener, patient yet firm, and set good example. According to Alex Landis (2011), the important twelve characteristics of a teachers are love what they do, good communicators, admirable, positive reinforcement, fair & just, leadership, committed, understanding, compassion & caring, confidence, prepared, professionalism.

Teaching is a career that provides challenges, excitement, personal reward and a chance to encourage and support others to achieve their goals. John Hattie (2003) identified five major dimensions of excellent teachers. Expert teachers: (i) can identify essential representations of their subject; (ii) can guide learning through classroom interactions; (iii) can monitor learning and provide feedback; (iv) can attend to affective attributes; and (v) can influence student outcomes. Different authors define academic leadership within different outlook. In this article the scope of academic leadership will be strictly relate with the people who is directly relate with teaching profession in tertiary level.

IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

First, from the secondary survey the authors identified thirty most important qualities of a teacher which are also important for a leader. Secondly, the authors asked respondents to identify 15 most important qualities of a teacher from those 30 qualities identified by authors, to come to conclusion. Interestingly, nine qualities (Table-3) have been supported by 100% of respondents in the sample.

Besides those nine qualities identified by students as most important qualities, students preference against other six qualities (Table-4) have been ranked. 65.71% students prefer knowledge (Table-4) as 10th quality of a teacher. Other five qualities among first fifteen are integrity, confidence, accessibility, patience, and dedication. Here, patience and accessibility got same importance (42.86).

The other 15 qualities depending on the preference of the respondents have been ranked (Table-5). Creativeness, discipline, dynamism, flexibility, organizing, insightfulness and responsibility scored lowest in this ranking. Accessibility and patience (42.86) got same ranking (13). Determination, involvement, and personality (28.57) got same ranking (17). Flexibility and insightfulness (17.14) got same ranking (21). And Dynamism and organizing (14.29) got same ranking (22). Details have been included in Annexure-II.

Students look for certain qualities/traits in teachers. When a student enters into a tertiary level, s/he

perceives his/her teacher as more than a teacher. It varies with the type of educational institute and the subject s/he studies. Definitely students of science

discipline perceive their teacher in different ways than students of arts discipline.

Table 2 : 111 qualities of leaders

Sl	Qualities	Sl.	Qualities	Sl.	Qualities	Sl.	Qualities
1	Accessibility	29	Dignify	57	Inspiration	85	Punctiliousness
2	Adventure	30	Diplomat	58	Integrity	86	Punctuality
3	Affection	31	Discipline	59	Intelligence	87	Quietness
4	Altruism	32	Diversity	60	Interaction	88	Realism
5	Ambition	33	Dynamism	61	Interest	89	Regularity
6	Aspiration	34	Efficiency	62	Intransigence	90	Reliability
7	Calmness	35	Empathy	63	Invincibility	91	Reliance
8	Candour	36	Energy	64	Involvement	92	Resource
9	Care	37	Enthusiasm	65	Judgment	93	Respect
10	Charisma	38	Experience	66	Kind	94	Responsibility
11	Cheerfulness	39	Extrovertness	67	Knowledge	95	Revolution
12	Communication	40	Faith	68	Listen	96	Rightness
13	Compassion	41	Flexibility	69	Loyalty	97	Riskiness
14	Competence	42	Focus	70	Maturity	98	Robot
15	Comprehension	43	Friend	71	Modesty	99	Sensible
16	Confidence	44	Frugality	72	Motivation	100	Seriousness
17	Conformity	45	Generosity	73	Optimism	101	Sincerity
18	Consciousness	46	Global	74	Orator	102	Spirituality
19	Consideration	47	Grate	75	Organizing	103	Support
20	Constructiveness	48	Hard-work	76	Passion	104	Sympathy
21	Cooperation	49	Honesty & Trustworthy	77	Patience	105	System
22	Courage	50	Humanism	78	Persistence	106	Thoughtfulness
23	Courtesy	51	Humbleness	79	Personality	107	Thrift
24	Creativeness	52	Humour	80	Persuasion	108	Tolerance
25	Dedication	53	Imagination	81	Planning	109	Toughness
26	Deliberation	54	Independence	82	Politeness	110	Unpretentiousness
27	Determination	55	Innovation	83	Positiveness	111	Vision
28	Devotion	56	Insightfulness	84	Practicality		

Table 3 : Most important qualities of a teacher

Sl	Criteria	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)	Quality Accepted by All
1	Communication	280	100.00	√
2	Competency	280	100.00	√
3	Honest & trustworthy	280	100.00	√
4	Humanism	280	100.00	√
5	Intelligence	280	100.00	√
6	Judgment	280	100.00	√
7	Motivation	280	100.00	√
8	Support	280	100.00	√
9	Vision	280	100.00	√

n=280

Table 4 : Other Important Qualities of a Teacher (40%<S<100%)

Sl	Criteria	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)	Ranking of other qualities
10	Accessibility	120	42.86	13
11	Confidence	128	45.71	12
12	Dedication	112	40.00	14
13	Integrity	136	48.57	11
14	Knowledge	184	65.71%	10
15	Patience	120	42.86	13

n=280, S=Students

Table 5 : Other Important Qualities of a Teacher (20% < S < 40%)

Rank	Criteria	No. of respondents	(%)	Sl.
15	Global	104	37.19	20
16	Resourcefulness	96	34.29	23
17	Determination, Involvement, & Personality	80	28.57	16, 21, 22
18	Devotion	72	25.71	17
19	Empathy	64	25.71	19
20	Diplomat	56	20	18
Other Important Qualities of a Teacher (0% < S < 20%)				
21	Flexibility, & Insightfulness	48	17.14	27, 28
22	Dynamism, & Organizing	40	14.29	26, 29
23	Discipline	32	11.43	25
24	Responsibility	24	8.57	30
25	Creativeness	16	5.71	24

n=280, S=Students

However, there are some traits or qualities which are common to all. For example, honesty, humanity, intelligent, etc. Students of all discipline in the sample identified nine most important qualities, for which they are 100 percent agreed. The most important fifteen qualities identified by respondents are discussed below:

Communication: Good communication skills are a must for a teacher. This skill involves speaking, listening and watching. With regard to speaking, the teacher has to be able to deliver the subject in a voice manner that will generate interest and response from the student. At the time of listening students should give the opportunity to construct questions they may wish to ask or to give an opinion. And by watching students, good teachers will be able to notice if any are being left behind in the learning process, or if confusion is arising (Lines, 2008).

Competency: Competency is the total package of one's ability to conduct his/her task in an effective and efficient manner. Competent teachers encourage active learning. By staying active in an array of professional, legal, ethical, political and policy activities related to the subject being taught, students learn to be professionals in the broadest meaning of the term (Rodgers, et. al. 1997).

Honesty and trustworthy: People want leaders who are honest, whose words are dependable, who are open, who are not always hiding the true reality of a situation from those they lead and who are genuine (Millard, 2008). In higher educational sector students want to have not only a teacher but an honest mentor. Because the sensitivity of the beneficiaries and the lead players in higher education system considering the nature of their tasks, calls for more attention to be paid to the observation of moral and human coeds (Noorshahi & Sarkhabi, 2010).

Humanism: People behave according to certain principles of human nature and human needs are an important part of human nature. Values, beliefs, and customs differ from country to country and even within group to group, but in general, all people have a few basic needs. In educational sector when it consider

about a teacher it must about qualities which is not non-human in nature. As a leader, a teacher need to interact with his/her students and to understand and motivate them, to know human nature is must. However, human nature is the common qualities of all human beings.

Intelligence: Intelligence is the ability to learn and apply what has been learned. To develop intelligence one need to commit to continual learning—both formally and informally (Suryavanshi, 2011). Robert Sternberg (1997) adds further that it involves the ability to adapt to the environment, or modify the environment, or seek out and create new environments. Different researchers have identified different components of intelligence. Sternberg (2000) focuses on just three main components: practical intelligence, experiential intelligence, and componential intelligence.

Judgment: Unlike decision-making, judgment is a continuous process, from inception to execution (Hoeffner, 2008). Unlike leaders, teacher's judgment plays a crucial role. Judgment about right and wrong is sometimes related with the future of students (Tichy and Bennis, 2007). That's why a teacher's behavior must be consistent, which can be achieved through setting applying equality. Teachers should treat their students equally, yet giving them the individual attention they need (Landis, 2008).

Motivation (inspiring): The inspirational leader understands that, while money is a motivator, so are praise, recognition, rewards and noticing an individual's contribution to a successful attempt (Heathfield, 2012). Good teachers try to motivate students by working within their own incentive system. Teachers who know their students' likes, dislikes, problems and personal issues are more likely to be able to "push the right button" and motivate students to learn (Rodgers, et. al., 1997).

Support: A supportive leader assists others emotionally, socially, and instructionally, and forges connections with them (Gabriel, 2005). The 6th century B.C. Chinese philosopher Laozi suggested that enlightened leadership is service, not selfishness. The leader places] the well-being of all above the well-being of self alone (Millard, 2008). Cruickshank, Jenkins, &

Metcalf (2003) reported that effective teachers are supportive of students in multiple ways and help to meet their needs for belonging and success.

Vision: Actually, the whole point of leadership is figuring out where to go from where we are now. When people do not consider their leader forward-looking, that leader is usually suffering from one of two possible problems: The leader doesn't have a forward-looking vision, or the leader is unwilling or scared to share the vision with others (Suryavanshi, 2011). Students need to know that a teacher has a strong vision for the future and a strong plan for going forward.

Knowledge: Knowledge brings respect. When a teacher is knowledgeable, his students will have a high respect and esteem for him. This is because they already know that their leader is capable of providing solution to their problems. They will see him as the brain behind the success. It may be reverse when a teacher knows little and it may lead to lack of respect.

Integrity: Integrity is the integration of outward actions and inner values. A teacher of integrity can be trusted because he or she never changes direction from inner values. A person of integrity acts as a powerful model for people to copy thus builds an effective cultural values (Bennis, 1989). Honest dealings, predictable reactions, well-controlled emotions, and an absence of tantrums and harsh outbursts are all signs of integrity.

Confidence: In order to lead and set direction a leader needs to appear confident as a person and in the leadership role. A teacher can't teach without confidence. Students won't believe in a teacher that first doesn't believe in there-self. Great teachers are confident that they know how to teach, and in what they are teaching (Landis, 2008).

Accessibility: Accessibility requires an intention to be available to others, whether holding regular office hours, having a public presence in a community, or simply regularly returning phone calls and emails. These types of leaders are transparent and reveal themselves without inhibition. Teachers obviously should be accessible during contract hours. But because the nature of the job demands that teachers often take their work home, they should be accessible after hours as well (Gabriel, 2005).

Patience: Teachers need to be patient, but they also need to be firm. Patience is a part of being firm. If a teacher does not remain firm on some set boundaries in the classroom, students usually retaliate through behaviors. Patience comes in giving students time to absorb the reality of boundaries. Firmness is in correcting the student through reminders (Glenda 2008).

Dedication: Dedication means spending whatever time and energy on a task is required to get the job done (Bennis, 1989). There is no doubt that a great teacher is dedicated. They go above and beyond

the time requirements of a typical teacher, and are willing to help students whenever they need it. They are very dedicated to the curriculum they teach, and continue learning in the hopes of becoming even better teachers.

VI. CONCLUSION

Excellence in teaching is expected by everyone. However, excellence in teaching is not just good technique. People give importance on different attributes/qualities of a teacher to be excellent depending on their own judgment. This judgment varies from person to person, country to countries. It depends on persons own values, norms, customs, ethics, culture, etc. These attributes are sometimes same regardless of countries boundary. These attributes/qualities make a teacher a leader. Bennis (2002) contends that "leadership is not a science. It's not a recipe. It's not the five rules about this or the six effective habits of that. It is an art". It is mainly part of social science. It is important for a teacher to act as a leader, as a mentor and in doing so the required qualities do not need to be of magnificence or not about doing something out of world. It should be noted that teachers are actually of the students, by the students and for the students.

The insights about the fifteen characteristics revealed by the study are mere indication of a 'profile of preference of trait/qualities', perceived by students of different discipline. We tried to portray that. The degree of importance of qualities sometimes varies depending on the discipline (science, arts, and business). At the same time, there are many external factors which influence the teachers and create discrepancy between the teachers' desired/ expected behavior and overt behavior. For example, the administrative complexity of the institution; resource, time and support available to the teacher; explicit teaching policy of the institution and a lot more things can be addressed. However, common qualities are common to everyone. Teacher's qualities not always depending on teachers' own state of art. Situational factors are also play an important role here. As a teacher it is of utmost importance that one tunes her/his leadership skills and find the best style of teaching for the students they are teaching.

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