



Some Aspects of Effective Educational Leadership in this Twenty-First Century

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Abstract

To exercise some legitimate powers vested on a headmaster, principal or administrator is not leadership. It is simply the office-holding. Leadership is an art to influence people so that they strive willingly and enthusiastically towards achievement of group goals. This twenty-first century will be much advanced than the past centuries. The persons at the helm of educational institutions will have a strong responsibility to produce efficient manpower to meet the needs of the century. For this purpose not only formal office-holding but also effective educational leadership is a need of the day. In the present article we have thrown some light on this vital issue.

Keywords: Educational institution, Office-holding, Effective educational leadership.

Introduction

We have entered the twenty-first century. A decade is also already elapsed. Will this century be like the previous ones? It is definitely not. Life will be much busier. For getting some information we need not wait for days or weeks like before. Just by the click of a button we can send data to or retrieve from even other part of the globe. That means, the earth will become, as if, much smaller. The barriers of caste, creed, race etc. will go on depleting. The boys and girls will remain more curious in different matters¹. Several devices used by the grown up persons in the past centuries will become the toys of the children². In this changing scenario the educational institutions must play a vital role to prepare the young generation to meet the challenges of the future. The persons at the helm of affairs of these institutions will definitely have additional burden to impart the curriculum keeping in mind that it is the twenty-first century—not the twentieth one. So, the office-holding only will not serve the purpose. They are to show effective educational leadership. This is not only for the betterment of the society. This will be necessary also for the sustenance and advancement of an academic institute itself.

Challenges

Some of the challenges of the present century are as follows: i. It will be a fast paced century. In this century everything—planning, implementation, evaluation, direction or controlling—is to be carried out with faster speed than that happened during the last century. ii. It will be a conscious era. People will be much conscious about their rights and duties. They will put their claims and grievances in more prudent ways and show repercussions dynamically. iii. It will be a period of information boom. For knowing something persons will be reluctant to search for proper gurus. Rather they will search the

matter in the internet. iv. It will be an era of open learning. Instead of traditional class-room studies the students will gradually move towards correspondence courses and distance education³. v. It will be a century of technology explosion. A device or technology which is a charm for the time being will be thrown away as garbage within a short period for being obsolete due to invention and introduction of newer technology. vi. It will be a borderless era. There will be tremendous interaction among different communities with respect to their thought, custom, culture etc⁴.

In such an era whether an educational institution will flop or rise that will depend upon how fast it can mould itself to cater to the needs of the century. There is no scope of satisfaction for the heads of these institutions just by imparting routine education to the students. An effective educational leadership is a need of the era.

Leadership

Leadership is defined by different social scientists in different ways. According to Davis, leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically; it is the human factor which binds a group together and motivates it towards goals⁵. Tannenbaum *et al* have said that leadership is interpersonal influence exercised in a situation and directed through communication process towards the attainment of a specialised goal or goals⁶. According to Drucker, leadership is the lifting of a man's sights to higher vision, the raising of a man's standard to higher performance and the building of a man's personality beyond its normal limitations⁷.

In a nut shell leadership is: i. the process in which an individual member of a group or organisation influences others, ii. the

organisation of work activities, iii. motivating people to achieve the desired objectives, iv. maintenance of co-operative relationship, v. the development of skills and confidence and vi. the enlistment of support and co-operation from members outside the group or organisation.

A question naturally arises: are the principals leading their academic institutes really leaders? To find the answer one should realise that principals are those who do things right but leaders are those who do right things. The principals seek stability but the leaders seek innovation. In fact, administration and leadership are distinct processes—not different types of people⁸.

Greatman Theory

It was previously thought that leaders are born and not made. There are some inherent qualities with a leader. These qualities are god gifted. Leaders have the ability to sit through the minds of people, to tell the future and to compel obedience hypnotically. It was believed that the leaders have the phenomenal physical capacity and tremendous mental alertness to withstand the rigours demanded by their positions. According to Terry, the stamina to see things through, to overcome all sorts of obstacles and to keep everlastingly at it ranks high on the list of leadership requirements⁹.

Now-a-days it is argued that smart guys are not necessarily leaders and so, leadership qualities can be acquired through the process of education and training. Several research studies were undertaken between 1930 and 1950 to study leadership traits and point out the outstanding features of effective leaders. The chief problem with this trait approach is that no one has ever found a set of leadership traits that could be supported as truly universal and essential for leadership.

Leadership Style

A leader's typical way of behaviour with the group members is called as leadership style. Frankly speaking, there are as many different styles as there are leaders. However, the organisational researchers have classified it into three broad categories:

Autocratic style: This is also known as authoritarian, directive or hard-nosed style. In this type of leadership style the leader centralises power and decision-making in himself. He gives orders and the subordinates are expected to obey them without hesitation.

This is a speedy leadership style and applicable to inexperienced and untrained subordinates only. If the leader is not competent enough, such leadership style may create frustration and reaction among the followers.

Democratic style: This is also known as participative or employee-oriented style. In this leadership style the leader is the

conductor of an orchestra rather than a one-man band. He consults the subordinates before arriving at decisions. All members of the group appear as important contributors to the final decision.

This is a time-consuming leadership style and applicable to experienced and highly motivated subordinates only. Otherwise, the followers may view the leader to be incompetent to handle crisis independently and label him as an effective escapist.

Free-rein style: This is also known as laissez-faire style. This style is characterised by the absence of any active leadership by the leader. The subordinates are asked to set their own goals and to develop plans for achieving them. The leader merely functions as a member of the group and provides only as much advice and instruction as is sought.

This type of leadership style is applicable only when the organisational goals have been communicated well in advance and the subordinates are well trained, enthusiastic and dutiful. Otherwise, due to very little control or influence over group members organisational chaos may be cropped up¹⁰.

Effective Educational Leadership

Some of the features are highlighted here for effective educational leadership:

Task orientation: There are various parameters for managing an educational institution efficiently. An educational leader should be fully aware of these parameters e.g. planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling. He must have the foresight to recognise the needs of the days.

Implementation period: This twenty-first century being a fast paced century, an effective educational leader should take quick decision as to which actions deem fit and proper and then follow necessary steps to implement them at the earliest convenience.

Relationship maintenance: In order to run an academic institution efficiently the educational leader should maintain a good relation with the teaching and non-teaching staff as well as students. He should hear patiently their grievances and look into their personal problems also. That means, he should be, as if, the father of the members of different groups.

Instructional capacity: An effective educational leader must possess the capability to diagnose different educational problems, council the teaching staff, rearrange the curriculum in accordance with the needs, evaluate the performance of staff members and take suitable remedial measures. That means, he should be a teacher of the teachers.

Effective communication: To cope with the needs of this fast paced century time to time changes in different aspects are presumed to be inevitable for running an educational institution

efficiently. Such changes may give rise to grapevining among the staff members by nature. So, an educational leader must possess the skill to communicate effectively to his subordinates.

Work culture: An effective educational leader must have the capacity to develop a healthy and competent work culture among the staff members. He should motivate them for the same instead of applying the simple carrot and stick policy.

Morale building: In order to raise an academic institute to a high esteem an effective educational leader should also boost up the morale of his subordinates. He should make them feel proud as employees of their very institution.

Conclusion

In this first century of the new millennium many things will become volatile due to tremendous advancement in the technology sector. Newer things will replace the previous ones which were new even few days ago. In this changing environment the educational institutions shall have to bear the highest share of responsibility in connection with the need identification and the making of students, the future generation of the society, fit for the century. If these institutions are ready to serve the purpose of the society properly, time is coming that the heads of them should introspect on their day to day function: are they simply holding the office or pursuing the leadership behaviour? If the answer be the former, they should try their level best to switch over to the effective educational leadership strategy. If the answer be the later, they should continuously check whether their leadership is effective one. Otherwise, such

an educational institution will not only lose its reputation but also apprehend at one point of time for its survival in this twenty-first century.

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