CHAPTER - 6

ROLE OF ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP
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6.1 Introduction

Many studies have confirmed that most often higher educational institutions are confronted by a leadership crisis.

The leaders in educational institutions are chancellors and pro vice-chancellors, deans and associate deans, directors of learning and teaching departmental heads.

These leaders have a number of areas of focus in academic leadership, like policy formulation, relationship management, working with a challenging staff, planning and convening budget administration meetings, monitoring external relations, discovering new openings, formulating policies, developing processes and reviewing teaching activities.

Academic leadership involves inducing people to be a part of academic change. It also involves taking them forwards, getting others to follow voluntarily, helping pinpoint what needs to be done and then making it happen.

An academic leader is a person who has a certain set of qualities and capabilities, who is inspirational and aspirational.

A leader can inspire and make his co-workers proceed in the direction that fulfills their latent abilities as well as the aims of the university; can think for the future; is a path finder; can take a hard decision and is able to build a structure so as to determine what is going on and who is responsible.

In a collective sense they are a set of persons managing a university or a unit thereof or an institution who work in a reciprocally supporting way to get things done.

“Leadership is not the work of a single person. It can be defined as a collaborative endeavor among group members”- Rost (1993a), cited Brungardt (1998).

Where higher education is concerned, leaders must also employ various leadership techniques of transformation, distribution, sharing and situation.

In higher education the meaning of management and leadership are two different things. Management deals with the operational aspect of an organization. It is concerned with daily routine matters in the present, ensuring that the tasks in the organization are performed in an efficient and effective manner. Managers carry out their work in the right manner; they normally have a formal post and possess skills to perform their tasks.

Whereas, leadership is more planned, it focuses on the future, it determines the end towards which the organization will advance. The leader does the right things and asks the right questions and has the diagnostic capability.

A good leader needs to be a good manager but a good manager need not necessarily be a good leader.

Jones and Holdaway (1996) conducted a study in which they used the terms position, role, function and activity in the same way as leadership. Their study arrived at the following conclusion -

- “A position is a designation familiar to those in a given context.
- A role is a pattern of behavioral characteristics of the given context.
- A function is a category of behaviors within a role.
- An activity is a specific behavior which can be visible in different roles.
- Leadership, management and administration are different but overlap skill, knowledge and abilities.” - Jones and Holdaway (1996).

6.2 Meaning of academic leadership

“Academic leadership is based on authority being placed in the individual’s personal characteristics and expertise, and is the ability to win followers in the collegial culture of the academy.” - Scott, G, H Coates & M Anderson (2008).³

In the case of an education system, leading is “an individual’s or group’s capacity to influence the goal directed behavior of others.” - Bryman, 2007.⁴

According to House et al. (2004:15) “an individual is said to lead when he is able to influence and inspire others and facilitate in allowing them to contribute toward the effectiveness and success of the institution. The focus is on change and identifying the role for the transformational leader, in the current rapidly shifting operating context of the educational institutions” - House et al. (2004:15).⁵

Leadership in learning and teaching and the academic leadership is not the same. “Some academic disciplines require academics to act as individuals leading their own field in new directions” – Marshell, et al (2001:7).⁶

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6.3 Differences between academic leaders and leaders of other organizations

1. The problems faced in academic leadership are totally different from the leadership in corporate entities or government organizations which only want to maximize shareholder value. The objective of academic leaders is to focus on tutoring, imparting knowledge, doing research and gaining scholarship so that their best performance is brought out.

2. Academic leadership requires disciplining, pedagogical and institutional or sectoral expertise, whereas in leadership in other organizations such knowledge is not required.

3. An academic dean manages assets, finances and personnel, is responsible for work distribution and quality of knowledge imparted, teaching and research. If one looks at leaders of business organizations, they have a more restricted function and their control over resources is limited.

4. In universities a leader operates with the authority given to him by the society while the authority exercised by leaders in business enterprises is obtained from the position they hold.

5. Academic leadership involves getting people to follow you and making your influence felt. In industry the aim is profit and expansion of business.

6. Higher educational institutions operate under a timetable and political pressures by the government which is not the case in private business organizations. The qualities of leadership in higher educational institutions are affected by all these pressures.
6.4 Need for academic leadership

We are in the environment of constant innovation and change and invention. 70% of the jobs products and services that will exist in 2020 have not yet been invented (Ell yard 2000). Educational institution teachers cannot possibly train the young generation adequately for the jobs that exist in the future. The responsibility of institutions is to develop in students the understanding and skills that will be needed to live constructive, fulfilling lives, and also such that they are able to give to the society at large. Institutions are asking themselves how they can build learning communities that prepare for the unknown future.

1. For institutions to encourage lifelong learning and develop as a learning organization, all involved in the endeavor - teachers, principals, parents and students must actively engage in shaping their organization.

2. Professional learning becomes an essential change, to develop critical and reflective thinking, identifying needs of the students. Collaborative and democratic group processed and interaction with learning community.

3. Effective professional learning requires a leadership balance between educationists as leaders of their own learning journeys and administrative structures which provide support and performance expectations.

4. Most of our higher education students are the first generation to go to college and universities. Amidst this transformation, academic advancing needs have changed. This requires be redefining and redesigning at our institution.

5. Higher education degree programs of full time are changing into part time with definite job related goals. To recognize these different needs proper educational leadership is required.

6. Due to changing student expectations about educational course selection, and decisions related to career opportunities and due to institution expectations about faculty to giving excellent advice to their students, and identify appropriate individuals for career related events to be available and accessible to students.

7. Provide professional advisors, consistent accurate information and efficient intervention when students are struggling.
8. Thus need for academic leadership is to develop talent, to reduce organizational cost and time and to strengthen student satisfaction.
6.5 Role of academic leaders

The role of academic leaders is to influence change, both within and outside the institution. The academic leaders, like the heads of the universities, exist at the centre. They have complex relations with administration, students and faculty and outside bodies and support agencies. Their main task is to maintain a balance in all their relations and create a positive culture. They should have knowledge of legal and regulatory environments and technological advancement and must possess financial management skills and a strategic perspective. They should also maintain professional and personal balance and be concerned about the integrity of their faculty and institution.

“These are the challenging mixture of responsibilities which are necessary to address the complex and changing environment faced by our educational institutions” - Wolverton et al (2001).”

Ramsden (1998:238-40) gives 50 paradoxical aspects which the head of a higher educational institution has to manage, some of which are:

1. Vision, strategic action, planning and resource management.
   For example, how best the university guidelines are followed by the departments.

1. Enabling, inspiring and motivating staff.
   For example, how best he can avoid conflict, speak to and direct the staff and listen to them and consult them.”

3. Recognition, reward, performance assessment.
   For example, how best he is making staff accountable while letting them set their own professional standards. Rewarding efforts, delegating tasks and controlling the outcomes.”

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“4. Personal learning and development.

For example, balancing between academic leadership as a career and academic leadership as a temporary job.”*9

To summarize, it involves being able to figure out where to put the ‘and’ between two apparently opposite ways of proceeding.

All these show that almost 80% of the decisions on administrative matters in higher education are at the departmental level with increased accountability towards students and financial matters. This affects their decision making work.

The skills required by academic leaders are communication prowess, quick reaction to any situation and the ability to continuously evaluate and better their performance.

They should have the skills to manage the contrasting demands with the tension and pressures accumulated over the years.

Leadership in educational institutions does not have to be at the top level only. It should be exercised at all levels and employed in a clearly understood way and also be in harmony with the thinking in the organization. It turns out that each one becomes a leader in the field they are proficient in. The institutions that have managed to conquer change are conscious of this.

6.6 Qualities of academic leaders in higher education (KRG consultant 2007)

1. Focusing on key issues
2. Influencing the team
3. Endeavor to achieve
4. Attention to information
5. Interpersonal understanding and value system
6. Improving performance
7. Focusing on students and faculty
8. Founding and working on relationships
9. Encouraging teamwork
10. Nurturing others
11. Giving power to others
12. Communication skills
13. Personal growth
6.7 Role and competencies of universities in higher education

1. Universities play a large role in addressing new needs of society which involve a higher order of thinking and clinical analysis.
2. Exposing students to different and newer ways of thinking.
3. A new and different way of looking at problems, concepts and ideas.
4. Universities should be serving as laboratories of the society.
5. Provide opportunities to students and academicians for research and experiments.
6. Aimed at finding innovative solutions to the day to day problems of life.
7. To impart knowledge is not the only aim but it should be linked to a purpose and should be of practical relevance to the industry and society.
8. The institutions make an effort to reinvent themselves and bridge the gap with the industry and with the outside world.
9. The education pattern of a university should include internship programs in industry and business organizations. To complete university courses together with the internship exams so that the students get practical knowledge of industry along with theoretical knowledge of the courses. For example Delhi University has switched its 3 year semester graduation program into a four year program with an inbuilt one year of industry internship.
10. With increasing effects of globalization, cross border mobility and interdisciplinary cutting-edge research at all levels, our students should get the freedom to study what they want, when and how they want.
11. Our country is the youngest country on the planet. In the next 20 years more than half the world’s workforce will be from India. If our universities adequately educate and provide the required skills then we will be the next super-power of the world.
12. Universities should partner with the industry to organize knowledge sharing sessions for their faculty.
13. To make graduates job-ready, both industry and institutions need to collaborate, to enhance skills and knowledge.

14. When universities improve industry partnerships, students get to experience what they learn in lectures. This helps them to find good jobs.

15. Work experience and industrial placements help students test new ideas and put academic learning into practice. They develop their professional skills and profiles which makes learning more employable.

16. Research collaborations with the industry create new knowledge. These offer companies a chance to accelerate growth through new research techniques by building a strong relationship that encourage students to take up research posts in commercially meaningful settings.

17. University students volunteer opportunities in local charities as well as in positions of responsibility in student’s societies. This helps them to develop important transferable skills and contacts. This can be invaluable for applying for work or a job.

18. Competitive industries and universities should further with industry bodies to organize knowledge sharing sessions for their faculty. This helps them understand latest industry trends and challenges, demands and expectations and as a result the faculty will be able to help students gain practical knowledge about the ongoing trends in various sectors.

19. The curriculum of any university should be industry relevant so that the students excel not only in their studies but also do well in the professional world.

20. Universities develop partnerships and alliances with industry leaders, organizations and businesses where both industry and education work closely so that talent can be nurtured.
6.8 Leadership Capabilities

Leadership capabilities are divided into 3 parts.
1. Personal capabilities.
2. Interpersonal capabilities

i. Personal Capabilities:
   a. Self regulation:
      Deferring judgment; taking time to find a solution to a problem; gauging one’s own strong points and weaknesses; acknowledging the errors and learning from them; maintaining work life balance; remaining calm under pressure or in unexpected situations.

   b. Decisiveness:
      Willing to take hard decisions; confident in taking calculated risks; ability to tolerate vagueness and indecision; and being steadfast on one’s principles and morals.

   c. Commitment:
      A leader should have vigor, fervor and eagerness for absorbing and disseminating knowledge; expecting finest possible outcomes; understanding mental tasks when need arises.

ii. Interpersonal Capabilities

   a. Influencing:
      Influencing people’s behavior and decision; understanding of groups of people’s who influence in different situation; working with senior people; motivating others in the organization to attain positive results; managing people who are resistant to change and sometimes more than eager; using different colleges to take up workplace issues; receiving and giving useful feedback from/to colleagues and other staff members.
b. **Empathizing:**
Working with people and students from diverse backgrounds constructively and productively; listening to different points of view; contributing as a team-member in a positive manner; being open and truthful in dealing with colleagues.

ii. **Cognitive Capabilities**
a. **Diagnosis:**
Analyzing the underlying reasons of a problem and proceeding to take appropriate measures, recognizing to connect different activities, recognizing complex situations, understanding core issues and opportunities.

b. **Strategy:**
Ability to see an opportunity in a new direction, tracing out consequences of courses of actions, ability to use previous experience in unexpected situations, thinking creatively and laterally, having a clear idea of responsibility to justified and achievable direction, justify priorities in the day-to-day work.

c. **Flexibility and responsiveness:**
Amending a plan when problems occur during its execution; gaining knowledge from experiences; and knowing that each problem is unique and different and there cannot be a fixed method for solving work-place issues.
6.9 Leadership Competencies

6.9.1 Learning and teaching:

Knowing the need and manner of developing an effective program for higher education learning.

1. Having excellent and current knowledge of what makes students take interest in fruitful learning.
2. Comprehending how to devise and carry out assessment of a higher education program.
3. Having the required knowledge for implementing successfully new higher education programs.
4. Identifying and disseminating good learning and administrative methods throughout the institution and being updated about the advancements in educational techniques.

6.9.2 University operations:

1. Should understand role of risk management.
2. Understand how university operates.
3. Should understand industrial issues and processes.
4. Be able to teach staff how to implement essential changes in an effective manner, to head meetings, and should have expertise in organizational and resource management.

6.9.3 Self organizational skills:

1. Have the ability to manage current professional educational programs.
2. Be able to utilize information technology in such a way that communication and work, both are carried out with the desired results.
3. Should be able to manage time effectively and make effective presentations.
6.10 Key indicators which judge the effectiveness of academic leaders

Following are the key indicators of effective academic leadership, each expressed in a definite form of accomplishment or result. They focus on positive implementation and impact.

To gauge the effective performance of an academic leader the aspects like value of inputs, plans formulated, evaluations done and funds and manpower apportioned are essential requirements but are not enough.

1. **Personal and interpersonal outcomes:**
   Personal and interpersonal outcomes include attaining goals of developing one’s self, creating a pleasant working atmosphere and having a high level of staff support and productive teachers.

2. **Learning and teaching outcomes:**
   It includes attaining high quality graduate results, optimum representation of all classes of students, greater student satisfaction and decreased student dropouts, producing noteworthy progress in the quality of education and winning awards.

3. **Recognition and Reputation:**
   A leader can get recognition and reputation by accomplishing a high profile in the area of responsibility, churning out positive results, giving a presentation on educational techniques, writing thesis and reports and getting encouraging reaction.

4. **Financial performance:**
   A leader should be able to achieve positive financial outcome by meeting students load, target and secures competitive fund related to teaching and learning and winning financial resources.
5. **Effective Implementation:**

An effective leader brings into effect inventive strategies and procedures, completes the jobs and projects as per schedule and as per the norms set, is able to successfully deliver group projects in the educational field, produces excellent systems of learning, takes the initiative and successfully implements new policies.

All these are the achievements which signify the competence to bring about change in universities.
6.11 Approaches to the development of academic leaders

In order to become effective leaders university heads must understand their role and develop their leadership capabilities.

1. Listen, link and lead:
   First, listening to others’ points of view is the most important and practicable way to solve issues relating to learning and teaching. Then, the things said must be linked to the best possible way of implementing the selected option. And, to end with, execute the change in such a way it does not deviate from the results of the study.

2. Listen to those who resist:
   The resistors can help in determining a number of hindrances that need to be removed. Hearing them out is also a helpful method in tackling detachment.

3. Prior to organizing an open meeting on debatable issues, research its entire array of viewpoints.

4. Be available to staff members but inside pre-determined boundaries.

5. Not to panic when things don’t work out. Desist from blaming others by focusing on the problem at hand and not on the persons responsible.

6. After discussing personally with regard to an agreed course of action also confirm by email.

7. Establish agreed and understandable outcomes, right in the beginning, of what is required to be done, by whom, with the type of support and against what parameters. Then go back to this as the plan is implemented in the same way that expectations about evaluation and learning are managed.

8. Academic leaders must take into account the background and culture and realize that change, like education, is affected by the behavior of people and that their peer group motivates them.

9. An academic leader should ensure in a meeting that the agenda is perceived as conveyed and the focus is on action; that result from the action taken is reviewed in the next meeting.

10. An academic leader must function in such a way that he is regarded as a model. His behavior should reflect the value and practices that he wants others to adopt.

11. Must convince staff what really counts; make them aware of what they must focus on, why, and the role they would play in executing the plan.
Finally, a leader should show that he alone is not responsible for the success of the organization. The framework and the empirical data that he has are the key element for their success.
6.12 Conclusion

In conclusion we can say that an effective academic leader is one that sets the goals to be achieved and balances all four areas of the institution i.e. vision, power, structure, and resources, as all these are crucial components of success.

Visioning involves dialogue and it evolves through give and take. However the organization usually lacks the patience and commitment to gain from it. For the success of the organization, vision has to be carefully crafted and followed in all respects.

Certain positions like manager, supervisor etc. give a person the right to carry out particular duties and achieve the objectives of an organization. This is just an authority and is not what leaders do. Leaders are different – they make their followers want to accomplish towering goals. A good leader gets assigned leadership by his position, as he displays growing leadership traits by persuading people to do much better.

Leadership also implies governance of the organization, like formal reporting. Relationship within the institution, department or program also plays a major role. The head of the institution plays a very crucial role in the smooth and effective working of various committees like attendance committee, disciplinary committee, grievance committee, literacy and cultural committee, etc. These committees help in resolving issues quickly and aid in the overall development of students.

The resources like guest lecture committee, the seminar and conference committee and alumni committee are integral and important part of the institution. The role of a leader is to bridge the gap separating the institution and industry.

To create an excellent institution, a leader needs to constantly upgrade the policies and procedures. Accreditation is one of the methods of measuring excellence. It should be open and transparent. Through this accreditation institutions can develop a partnership in which one constantly challenges the current and thus reaches higher levels.