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Leadership In Higher Educational Institutions: From The Perspective Of Naac

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Abstract: Quality in Education has been defined as excellence in education. Assessment and accreditation as an external quality assurance mechanism for higher education has emerged as the most widely accepted and adopted methodology throughout the world during the past decades. Leadership has an important role in Total Quality Management of an educational institution. A person who influences the group of people towards the achievement of the goal is called a leader. This paper will discuss the leadership style and leadership behaviour in a Higher Educational Institution as desired by NAAC.

Index Terms: Quality, Leadership, Assessment

INTRODUCTION

Education is considered as the backbone of a society. The progress of civilization and the advancement of a nation depends upon the productive human resources. Education is considered as the most influential instrument to create human resources of a country. Education is considered as a piece of a diamond. When a person views the education from different angles, it gives different colours. It is a never-ending continuous and dynamic process. Education is a process by which a person develops his personality. Higher education is an integral part of national development. The higher education system in India is the third largest system of the world after China and the USA.

Educational Administration is considered with the management of an educational institution. Educational administration includes both internal and external administration. Internal administration means the management and organization of a college by the principal with the cooperation of teachers, students, and other stakeholders of the institution. On the other hand, external administration means the control and regulation of education and educational institutions by the central agencies, the state, and local authority.

In a college, principal is the leader. Success of the principal is not limited to maintaining files and day-to-day activities of the college. Various factors influence the administrative success of the principal of a college. These are cooperative attitude, communication skill, annual institutional planning, supervision skill, democratic attitude, organization ability, etc. A successful principal can create a good impression among the teachers, students, and other stakeholders. The principal wins confidence on others through his words, manners, and behaviour. Among those factors, leadership behaviour is one of the important factors for administrative success because it affects the behaviour of the other people of the institution.

Recent years, leadership has been studied extensively in different contexts. Most of the cases leadership has been described as a process. Leadership is typically defined by the traits, qualities, and behaviours of a leader. The study of leadership has spanned across cultures and theoretical beliefs. The style and process, in how the people are managed and the organization is run, is called leadership. A person who influences a group of people towards the achievement of the goal is called a leader.

The leader in a Higher Educational Institution (HEI) plays a role of an agent of change and discusses the implications of the resulting conflicts that are generated in the change process. Effective HEI leaders understand the change process and work daily to change their social organization.

Leadership is a basic element of education. A great leader inspires an entire community. In a period of crisis and transition, the position of the educational leader is more significant than at any other time.

India has one of the largest and diverse education systems in the world. Privatization, widespread expansion, increased autonomy, and introduction of Programmes in new and emerging areas have improved access to higher education. At the same time, it has also led to widespread concern on the quality and relevance of the higher education. To address these concerns, the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) and the Programme of Action (PoA, 1992) spelt out strategic plans for the policies, advocated the establishment of an independent National accreditation agency. Consequently, the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) was established in 1994 as an autonomous institution of the University Grants Commission (UGC) with its Headquarters in Bengaluru. The mandate of NAAC as reflected in its vision statement is in making quality assurance an integral part of the functioning of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is dedicated to embedding quality assurance into the core operations of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India. Its mission encompasses periodic assessments, accreditation, and fostering collaborations to enhance and sustain educational quality.

Leadership in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs):

NAAC's Revised Accreditation Framework emphasizes the significance of leadership under Criterion VI: Governance, Leadership, and Management. This criterion assesses how institutional governance and leadership align with the institution's vision and mission, ensuring effective implementation and continuous improvement.

Leadership within HEIs manifests through two primary dimensions: Leadership Style and Leadership Behavior.

1. Leadership Style:

- Strategic Vision: Leaders are expected to articulate a clear vision that aligns with the institution's mission, steering the organization towards long-term goals.
- Participative Decision-Making: Encouraging collaborative decision-making processes ensures that diverse perspectives are considered, fostering a sense of ownership among stakeholders.
- Innovative Approach: Adopting and promoting innovative practices in pedagogy, research, and administration to enhance institutional performance.

2. Leadership Behavior:

- Ethical Conduct: Upholding integrity and transparency in all institutional operations.
- Empowerment: Facilitating professional development opportunities for faculty and staff, thereby promoting a culture of continuous learning.
- Responsiveness: Being adaptable to changes in the educational landscape and responsive to the needs of students and society.

Effective leadership in HEIs, as outlined by NAAC, is pivotal in driving quality enhancement and ensuring that institutions remain dynamic, innovative, and aligned with their foundational objectives.

Leadership Style:

Leadership style is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. Different research has been conducted on leadership style. Most of the research established that there are three major leadership styles. These are-

- Authoritarian or Autocratic
- Participative or Democratic
- Servant or Laissez-faire

Authoritarian or Autocratic Leadership:

This type of leadership is 'boss-centered', which is characterized by maximum possible centralization of authority. The leader follows strict control and supervision. Takes unilateral decision making and one-way communication. In this style, the leader gives orders and insists that his followers to obey them blindly. Policies are determined without consulting the subordinates. The leader does not provide any information about plans. The subordinates do not have authority to influence the leader's decision. Under this style, all decision-making power is centralized in the leader. The leader does not give the subordinates any freedom to influence his decision. This style should normally be used on rare occasions.

Democratic Leadership:

Democratic leadership refers to a 'group centered' leadership style. Having delegation of authority and participative decision making. Two-way communication. Policies are framed after consulting with the subordinates. The leader favours decision making by the group. Allowing the subordinates to become a part of the team. Better decision making by leaders. This style involves the leader including one or more employees in the decision-making process. However, the leader maintains the final decision-making authority. Using this style is not a sign of weakness, rather it is a sign of strength that the employee will respect. In this style, the leader consults the group, gets various ideas, strategies, analyzes the pros and cons, and makes his own decision for implementation. The leader is the final decision-making authority.

Laissez Faire Leadership:

This type of leadership refers to 'subordinate centered' leadership. Having complete delegation of authority and free flow of communication. The leader gives complete freedom to subordinates. The leader avoids the usage of power and lets the subordinates decide their own goals and sort out their problems themselves. In this style, the leader does not interfere in the affairs of subordinates. In this style, the leader allows the employees to make the decisions. However, the leader is still responsible for the decisions that are made. This is used when employees can analyze the situation and determine what needs to be done and how to do it. The leader sets priorities and delegates certain tasks.

A good leader uses all three styles, depending on what forces are involved between the followers, the leader, and the situation. Traits Associated with Effective Leadership in Higher Educational Institutions

Leadership in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) is critical in fostering a culture of excellence, innovation, and accountability. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) emphasizes leadership qualities that align with institutional goals, governance, and strategic development. Below are key leadership traits and their relevance in HEIs:

Drive

Effective leaders in HEIs exhibit a high level of drive, ensuring motivation and progress in academic and administrative functions.

- High Level of Effort – Leaders must demonstrate consistent dedication, working towards the institution's growth, quality enhancement, and accreditation goals.
- Relatively High Desire for Achievement – A strong ambition to achieve excellence in education, research, and student outcomes is essential.
- High Energy – Leadership in academia demands enthusiasm, resilience, and an ability to inspire faculty, staff, and students.
- Persistence – The ability to navigate challenges, such as policy changes, accreditation demands, and research funding constraints, is crucial.
- Initiative – Proactively identifying and implementing innovative educational reforms, research initiatives, and institutional collaborations enhances credibility and ranking.

Desire to Lead

A strong inclination to take charge and influence institutional growth is a defining characteristic of an effective leader.

- Strong Desire to Lead Others – Leaders should take the initiative in driving institutional policies, motivating faculty, and engaging students in holistic learning.
- Willingness to Take Responsibility – A leader must be accountable for institutional success, ensuring compliance with NAAC standards, financial management, and academic outcomes.

Honesty and Integrity

Transparency, ethical conduct, and fairness in decision-making build trust and a positive institutional culture.

- Trusting Relationships with Followers – Building credibility among faculty, students, and stakeholders fosters an inclusive learning environment.
- Truthfulness – Upholding honesty in academic assessments, faculty evaluations, and institutional policies strengthens the institution's reputation.
- High Consistency Between Thoughts, Words, and Actions – A leader must ensure that policies and decisions align with the institution's mission and ethical standards.

Self-Confidence

A leader's confidence in their vision, strategies, and decision-making capabilities encourages institutional progress.

- Absence of Self-Doubt – Leaders must trust their abilities and remain firm in making strategic academic and administrative decisions.
- Self-Assurance that Convinces Followers of the Rightness of the Leader's Goals and Decisions – The ability to articulate a clear vision, gain faculty and stakeholder buy-in, and drive meaningful change is crucial.
- Intelligence

Cognitive skills enable leaders to navigate complex educational challenges and ensure informed decision-making.

- Ability to Gather, Synthesize, and Interpret Large Amounts of Information – Leaders must analyze accreditation requirements, educational trends, and research developments to improve institutional performance.

- Ability to Create Visions and Solve Problems – Formulating strategic goals and overcoming academic and administrative challenges is vital.
- Make Good Decisions Based on Analysis – Data-driven decision-making is essential for institutional improvements, curriculum development, and faculty evaluations.

Job-Relevant Knowledge

A leader's expertise ensures the effective governance of higher education institutions.

- High-Level Knowledge About the Organization – Leaders must understand the institutional structure, accreditation frameworks, and governance mechanisms.
- Vision, Mission, and Mandate of the Organization – Aligning leadership strategies with the institution's long-term vision and NAAC accreditation parameters is fundamental.
- Technical Matters Related to Group Activities – Competence in academic policies, research advancements, digital learning methodologies, and faculty development is essential for effective leadership.

Leadership Characteristics in Higher Educational Institutions

Effective leadership in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) plays a pivotal role in ensuring quality education, research, and institutional governance. According to the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), strong leadership fosters an environment of innovation, academic excellence, and continuous improvement. Below are the key characteristics that define an effective leader in HEIs:

A Good Communicator

- Communication is one of the most essential qualities of an effective leader.
- Listening Skills: A leader must actively listen to faculty, students, and stakeholders to understand their concerns and expectations.
- Clarity & Persuasion: Leaders should communicate the institution's vision, policies, and goals clearly and persuasively.
- Decision-Making: A good leader asks relevant questions, gathers insights from others, and makes well-informed decisions that benefit the institution.

Respectful

- A leader should treat faculty, staff, and students with respect, creating a positive and inclusive institutional culture.
- Mutual Respect: When a leader respects others' ideas, efforts, and contributions, they in turn earn respect from the academic community.
- Ethical Governance: Respecting diversity, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring fairness in decision-making enhances trust and institutional integrity.

Confidence

- Confidence in one's abilities and decisions inspire trust and motivates others to follow.
- Self-Confidence: A leader must believe in their vision, strategies, and ability to guide the institution effectively.
- Empowering Others: Confidence should extend to faculty and staff, ensuring that they feel valued and capable of fulfilling their responsibilities.

Enthusiastic

- Passion and enthusiasm drive motivation among faculty, students, and staff.
- Inspiration: A leader's enthusiasm about institutional goals encourages active participation and commitment.
- Positive Work Culture: When a leader is passionate, it fosters a work environment that is dynamic, engaging, and productive.

Open-Minded

- Higher education is an evolving sector; leaders must be flexible and open to change.
- **Inclusive Decision-Making:** Leaders should evaluate inputs from faculty, students, and external stakeholders to make balanced and well-informed decisions.
- **Adapting to New Trends:** Embracing innovative teaching methods, research advancements, and emerging policies enhances institutional growth.

Resourceful

- Efficient utilization of available resources ensures institutional sustainability and progress.
- **Problem-Solving:** A resourceful leader finds solutions to academic and administrative challenges through collaboration and critical thinking.
- **Seeking Knowledge:** If a leader lacks expertise in a particular area, they should seek guidance from experts and encourage knowledge-sharing.

Rewarding

- Recognizing and appreciating contributions boosts morale and productivity.
- **Faculty & Staff Recognition:** Acknowledging efforts in teaching, research, and administration enhances motivation.
- **Student Achievements:** Celebrating academic success, extracurricular excellence, and innovative contributions fosters a culture of encouragement.

Well Educated

- Knowledgeable leaders are better equipped to guide institutions towards academic and operational excellence.
- **Understanding Institutional Policies:** A leader must be well-versed in rules, regulations, and accreditation frameworks such as NAAC guidelines.
- **Commitment to Lifelong Learning:** Continuous learning and professional development ensure that leaders stay updated with global educational trends.

Open to Change

- Higher education institutions must evolve to meet emerging academic, technological, and societal needs.
- **Policy & Program Reforms:** Leaders must be willing to revise outdated policies, curricula, and cultural practices for institutional betterment.
- **Flexibility & Innovation:** Encouraging new teaching methodologies, research initiatives, and industry collaborations promotes institutional progress.

Evaluative

- Regular assessment of institutional policies, programs, and teaching methodologies ensures quality improvement.
- **Continuous Monitoring:** Reviewing institutional performance against accreditation benchmarks helps maintain high standards.
- **Data-Driven Decisions:** Utilizing feedback from faculty, students, and external stakeholders enables necessary improvements.

Delegator

- Effective delegation ensures efficient task management and promotes team collaboration.
- **Recognizing Strengths:** A leader must identify the talents and expertise of faculty and staff to assign responsibilities effectively.

- Empowering Teams: By delegating responsibilities, a leader fosters leadership skills in others and ensures smoother institutional functioning.

Conclusion

- In today's highly competitive educational landscape, higher educational institutions (HEIs) must continuously evolve to maintain high academic standards and achieve excellence. The role of institutional leadership, particularly that of the principal, is critical in shaping the academic environment, fostering innovation, and ensuring quality education. To develop a strong competitive spirit, principals must exhibit dynamic leadership behavior, which serves as a driving force for institutional growth and excellence.
- A dynamic leader adapts to change, inspires faculty and students, and proactively addresses challenges. By demonstrating effective leadership styles and behaviors, a principal can cultivate an environment of trust, collaboration, and motivation among all stakeholders, including faculty, students, administrative staff, and external regulatory bodies. This approach not only enhances institutional effectiveness but also creates a positive and progressive atmosphere within the college campus.
- In the context of NAAC accreditation, securing a high grade requires institutions to meet rigorous academic, governance, and quality benchmarks. The principal, as the chief academic and administrative leader, plays a pivotal role in ensuring that these standards are met. Through active involvement in institutional governance, fostering a culture of academic integrity, and implementing strategic reforms, a principal can drive improvements in teaching, research, and student engagement.
- Moreover, an acceptable leadership behavior, characterized by transparency, inclusivity, accountability, and innovation, is essential for creating a healthy academic ambience within the institution. When faculty members feel supported, students are empowered, and administrative systems function efficiently, the institution naturally progresses towards excellence.
- Thus, by embracing strong leadership characteristics, aligning with NAAC's quality parameters, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement, principals can significantly contribute to institutional success and accreditation achievements. Their leadership will not only enhance institutional reputation but also ensure sustained academic excellence and holistic development of students, thereby positioning the institution as a leader in higher education.

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