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**Leadership and Management Development Concerns of New Era
Academia Leadership**

Gokuladas Vallikattu Kakoothparambil

Athens Institute for Education and Research

8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10683 Athens, Greece

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Gokuladas Vallikattu Kakoothparambil, Head - Operations, Board of
Directors - Indian Schools in Oman, Oman

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ABSTRACT

The success of an educational institution in the modern era depends on various factors, of which Academic leadership has always been in the forefront. Leadership role in academia has undergone tremendous changes in the recent past, thanks to the growth in the number of educational institutions in the private sector. With the ever increasing demand for better educational facilities at affordable expenditure, it has become the need of the hour for leaders in this arena to understand various roles being played by them so as to capacitate them with required skills that in turn will enable them to be successful in these roles. Lack of adequate support in nurturing various professional skills especially for an academicians-turned-leader poses yet another challenge for them to realize their potential to tackle any issue in the management of the institution while dealing with the concerns of various stakeholders. The main aim of this article is to explore those challenges that leadership in academia is likely to encounter while dealing with various stakeholders of an educational institution and to develop a conceptual development programs model that could result in better Leadership and Management skills. This article is expected to expose various categories of skills and attitude academic leaders need to acquire so as to effectively manage their interactions with various stakeholders in the institution. This will help top management of the institution to provide adequate support to their academic leaders through various developmental programs.

Keywords: Academic leadership, Stakeholders in Academic Institutions, Challenges in leadership in Academia, Leadership and Management Development programs.

Introduction

The success of an educational institution in the modern era depends on various factors, of which effective academia leadership has always been in the forefront. Overseeing curricula, faculty and general administration of the institution used to be the only role of academia leadership in yesteryears (Geiger, 1989) whereas budgeting, raising funds, managing conflicts within the institution have become the most important profile of academia leadership in the current era (Miller and Bisbee, 2007). Coupled with excessive paperwork, attending number of meetings, and meeting various deadlines (Gmelch et al., 1999), these challenges have placed academic leaders in such a situation that necessitates them to frequently change over to different organizational roles without having adequate time gap (Rosser et al., 2003). Therefore, in order to be successful in the position of academia leadership, one has to possess excellent managerial and leadership skills. The question that arises at this juncture is whether the current generation of academia leaders does possess such skills to tackle the situations effectively. This paper is an attempt to identify various challenges that an academia leadership of current era are likely to face and whether development programs be solutions to overcome such challenges.

Relevant Literature

Number of studies has shown light into the fact that leadership positions in academic institutions are one of the most challenging jobs in the current era (Murphy, 2003; Rowley & Sherman, 2003; Smith and Hughey, 2006; Middlehurst et al., 2009). Existence of multiple power and authority structures, complex decision-making processes, and the co-existence of ambiguous goals of stakeholders within and outside of the organization makes the role of academia leadership complicated (Kondakci and Van den Broeck, 2009). Academic work environments are generally characterized by high levels of uncertainty (Smith & Hughey, 2006). Moreover, leadership in academia spans across multiple levels, including individuals, teams, and the entire organization (Bolden et al., 2009). Since majority of the leadership activities in the academic institution are viewed subjectively, it is important for academia leadership to establish quality relationship with all stake holders of the institution (Johnsrud et al., 2000). At the same time, there is a need to maintain excellent standards in research, teaching, and service (Corlett, 2005) while managing different teams at varying levels of administration. As such, academia leadership could be conceived as more complex with pressing challenges of managing autonomy, continuous changes, and uncertainty in the academic context (Peus et al., 2015). In nutshell, academia leadership could be viewed as a position that is pressurized between the demands of from top management to diligently run affairs of the institution and the expectation of faculty to be more generous to their personal and professional pursuits (Wolverton et al., 1999).

Academic leaders are challenged to create stimulating environments with opportunities for individual development and self-realization (Karran, 2009), while facing uncertainties themselves. Leadership in the current era do not enjoy 'command and control' relationship, instead they are required to communicate compelling visions, share responsibilities, and manage complexity in order to be effective (Braun et al., 2016). Davies et al., (2001) and Yelder & Codling, (2004) identified that creating a vision, communicating strategy, and aligning individual and organizational goals as major tasks for leaders in academic contexts. This means leaders need to possess high level of managerial and leadership skills to be successful in their roles. This is in alignment with the findings of Maghroori and Powers (2004) that skills and abilities required of strong faculty members are totally different from that of academic administrator. Therefore, it is always advisable to hire an individual with administrative skills to become an academic leader rather than selecting someone merely based on seniority (Wolverton et al., 2000). However, numerous instances are there wherein academic leadership positions are fulfilled only on the basis of research and scholarships, not on the managerial skills (Macfarlane, 2011). Academics are generally promoted on the basis of their teaching and research output and not necessarily because of their leadership skills. As such, individuals who reach leadership positions in academic institutions without any formal training or previous leadership experience, are likely to lack an understanding of the required role and its impact on their and others' lives (Gmelch, 2000).

Chun et al., (2009) observed that leadership by nature itself is a multi-level phenomenon characterized by relationship between not only individual leader and their followers but also between leaders and multiple teams in the organization. Since leadership has been regarded as the most important factor in organizational success or failure (Bass, 1990), leaders need to exhibit abilities to enhance morale by managing and steering their own feelings while acknowledging others' feeling about the workplace (Cherniss, 2001). Tigelaar et al., (2004) observed that while training programs for enhancing teaching and learning do happen quite often in many academic institutions, systematic development programs such as for heads of department, head of institutions leaders etc., are very rare in these institutions (Strathe & Wilson, 2006; Wolverton et al., 2005; Braun, et al., 2009). Also, unlike in the industrial sector, succession planning has not been meticulously carried out in academic institutions (Laff, 2008) to ensure that appropriate leadership is nurtured and made ready for eventual transition of leadership (Bisbee, 2007).

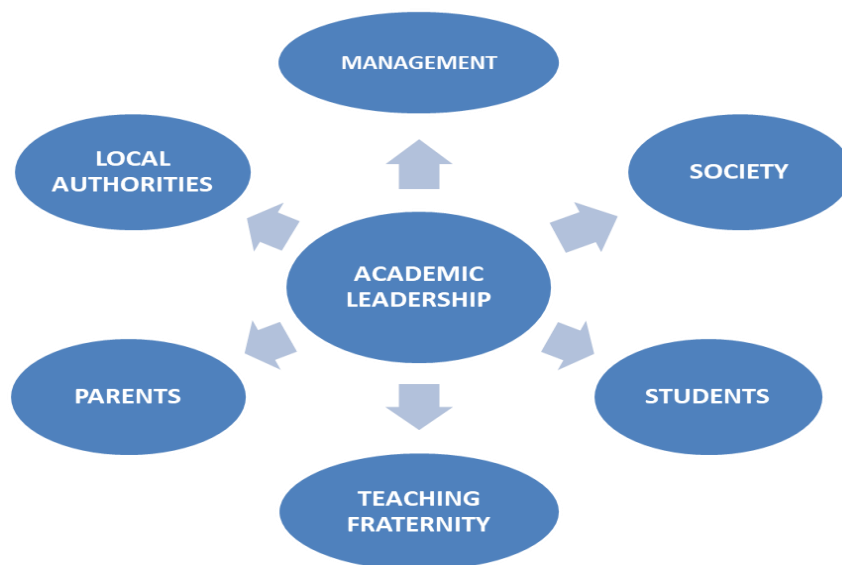
Leadership role in academia has undergone tremendous changes in the recent past, thanks to the growth in the number of educational institutions in the private sector. With the ever increasing in the demand for better educational facilities at affordable expenditure, it has become the need of the hour for leaders in this arena to understand various roles being played by them so as to capacitate them with required skills that in turn enable them to be successful in these roles. Lack of adequate support in nurturing various professional skills especially for an academician-turned-leader poses yet another challenge for them to realize their potential to tackle any issue in the management of the institution while dealing with the concerns of various

stakeholders. The literature review section also corroborates the above statement that leads to the identification of following research questions.

Research Questions

Leaders in academia are expected to meet the interests of a range of different stakeholders, such as governments, students, administrative as well as academic staff, etc. (Milliken, 1998). This leads academia leaders to put on various roles at the same time ranging from figureheads for their departments, leaders of staff and students, to liaisons with external stakeholders (Hoff, 1999). Wisniewski (2002) identified that academia leadership has become more complex and multidimensional in the current era mainly because of information explosion, student consumerism, need for accountability, and high costs of education. It is highly imperative that the academia leadership maintain strong communication channels with various stakeholders of the institution so as to ensure that they substantiate their role in leading the institution in the most appropriate manner. In general, academia leadership is accountable to the following stakeholders of the institution as given in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Stakeholders of Educational Institutions*



Management of the Institution

Management of the institution plays a vital role in maintaining conducive working environment in the organisation. It is the Management of the institution that provides required support to the academia leadership in running the institution as planned. Management of the institution provides policy decisions upon which academia leadership needs to initiate various course of actions to implement such policies. As such, it is important to maintain continuous and

clear channels of communication with Management for necessary guidance and adequate assistance in executing the functions effectively. Therefore, it is imperative that academia leadership is in line with the thinking process of the management and their visionary expectations.

Society

The very purpose of educational institutions is to produce better citizens for the society. It is through these institutions society gains through betterment of its people. In other words, educational institutions are one of the pillars upon which a better society is built upon. Therefore, it is imperative that academia leadership is in constant touch with society for understanding its pulse and take appropriate actions to meet societal requirements. In short, each and every step of an educational institution should be aimed at providing that kind of education which meets the societal requirement. In order to maintain such interaction with society, academia leadership should remain constantly in touch with it through various programs and functions.

Teaching Fraternity

Teaching fraternity is the main pillar of an educational institution. The core activities of an educational institution rest upon this category of employees. The teaching professionals need to be provided with lot of respect, recognition, and dignity for the kind of efforts they make towards building a better society through knowledge. Higher the morale of teaching fraternity in the organization, greater will be the outcome in terms of students' development. Academia leadership, therefore, needs to exhibit utmost dignity and admiration towards the teaching fraternity so as to get the best out of them. There should be concerted efforts on the part of academia leadership to listen to the professional concerns and ideas of teaching fraternity and create a working environment that sustains their morale at a high level so as to result in the overall growth of the institution.

Local Authorities

The support of local authorities is more or less mandatory for every institution with respect to the development of the institution, be it additional construction, organizing important functions etc. As such, it is imperative on the part of academia management to constantly liaise with the local governing authorities and maintain a cordial relationship with them. Such relationship will not only help the institutions in getting the required approvals at the earliest but also facilitate a sense of belongingness among the local authorities towards the institution. Therefore, academia leadership needs to be in close touch with local authorities so as to build good rapport with them.

Parents

Parents form yet another important stakeholder in an educational system. Parents repose their faith in the academic institution because they believe that the institution will take their wards to higher level of education. Students will remain with an institution as long as it enjoys such faith of parent fraternity. As such, it is important for academia leadership to actively listen to all concerns and suggestions put forward by the parent fraternity and take appropriate action on such suggestions. Therefore, as an academic leader, one shoulders unconditional responsibility towards the parents of students who are studying in the institution. Such gestures will go a long way in emanating trust by parent in the leadership of the institution.

Students

Students look up to head of institutions as someone who can provide solutions to all their issues. Be it academics, extra-curricular, or co-curricular activities, it is the head of the institution who steers such initiatives that make students more inclined towards the activities of the school. Students see a role model in academia leadership who will be guiding them in every sphere of activities. At the same time, students also expect head of institution as someone who can come down to their level and meet their requirements. Therefore, it is of prime importance for the academia leadership to keep a close affinity towards students so that they behave the way the educational requirements demand. At this juncture, the following research questions arise:

- Do these academicians need development programs to strengthen leadership qualities?
- What skills do they need to exhibit to have effective communication with stakeholders?

In order to address the above research questions, the following conceptual research model has been proposed.

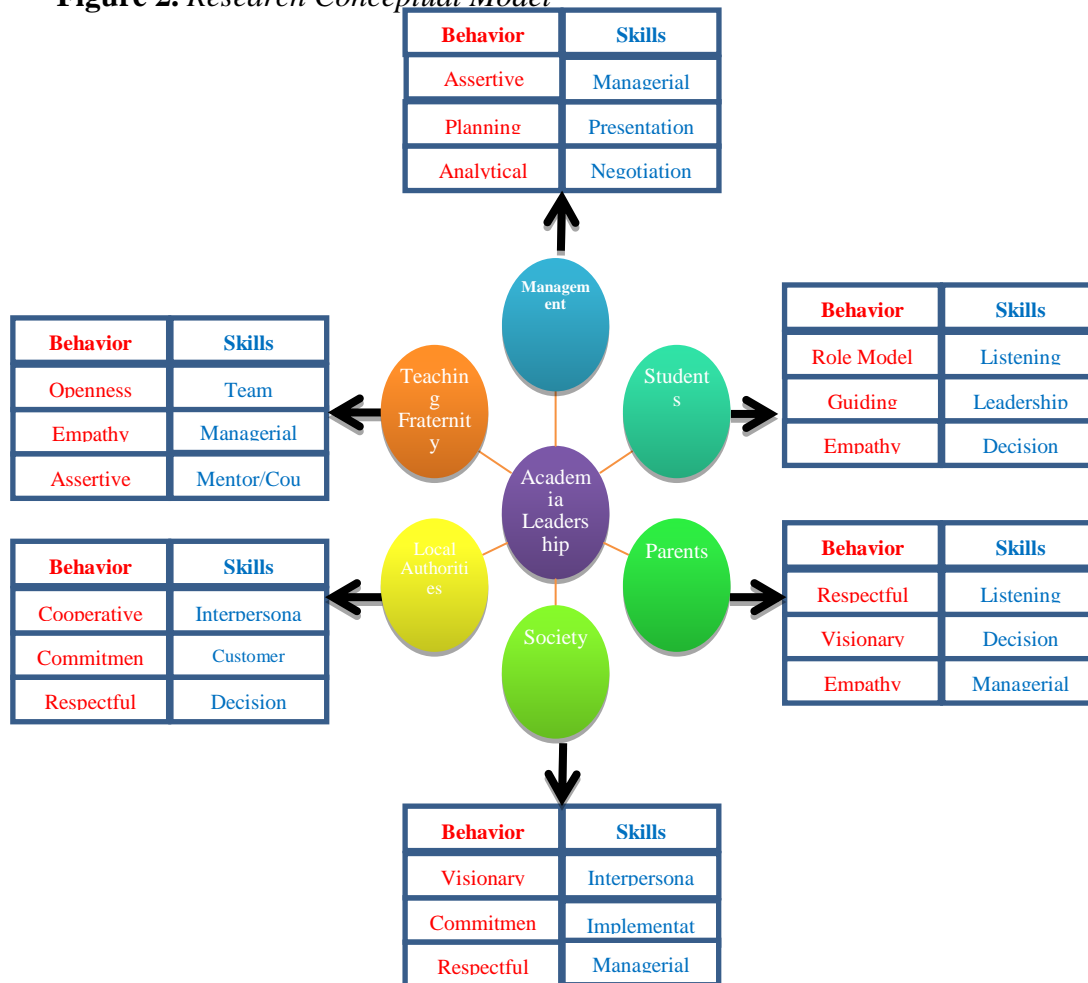
Proposed Research Conceptual Model

It has been identified that one of the ways through which availability of trainers leaders could be ensured in the field of academia who could maintain cordial communication with all stakeholders is to identify potential leaders and provide them with support, training, and encouragement to take on leadership roles (Brown, 2001). Braun et al., (2009) also insisted that there should be comprehensive leadership development programs that are specifically tailored to the leadership in academia. Smith and Wolverton (2010) identified that for administrative leaders of academia to be more effective, they need to possess competencies such as analytical and communication skills, understanding and

sensitivity to handle student affairs, personal characteristics (e.g., humor, empathy) as well as skills to maintain cordial external relations. People skills have been identified as crucial for success of academia leadership (Riggio and Lee, 2007) which can be effectively inculcated through appropriate leadership development programs (Morris, 2012). In view of these studies, the research model as given in Figure 2 has been suggested for the purpose of devising a development program that could be of greater assistance to academia leadership to sharper their administrative skills.

Research Conceptual Model

Figure 2. *Research Conceptual Model*



Behavior and Skills Requirement towards Management

Very often academia leadership needs to take Management into confidence with respect to the development process of the institution. These include approval for infrastructure development, approval for fund mobilization and utilization, approval of Administrative decisions, annual budget preparation and approval, selection and training of staff, raising funds for the institution,

redress of grievances etc. In order to be proficient in these behaviors, one needs to develop skills such as managerial skills, negotiation skills, and presentation skills.

Behavior and Skills Requirement towards Students

Academia leadership needs to put on the role of a guide, role model, and someone who understands the issues related to students. In order to meeting these expectations of students, academia leadership needs to sharpen their leadership skills, listening skills, and decision making skills so as to perform better.

Behavior and Skills Requirement towards Parents

Parents are the key to success of academia leadership in many institutions. Once parents get the feeling that they are heard by the academia leadership and adequate actions are initiated on their concerns, they will have more faith on the leadership of the institution. In order to be effective in this role, academia leadership needs to develop empathy as part of their profile coupled with good managerial, decision-making and listening skills.

Behavior and Skills Requirement towards Society

Society expects academia leadership to be a visionary in terms of understand the pulse of the society and take pro-active steps towards contributing to the development of society through commitment and respectful behavior towards society members. In order to be proficient in this role, academia leadership needs to hone managerial and interpersonal skills coupled with adequate planning and implementation skills.

Behavior and Skills Requirement towards Local Authorities

Academia leadership needs to maintain a very cordial and healthy relationship with the local authorities so as to be beneficial for the institution. They need to exhibit a cooperative and respectful behavior with thorough commitment to the cause of the institution. Academia leadership needs to exhibit good interpersonal and customer-relations skills coupled with decision-making skills.

Behavior and Skills Requirement towards Teaching Fraternity

Teaching fraternity, being the core category of employees, needs to be appropriately mentored/counseled by the academia leadership so as to bring about organizational growth. They should be treated with openness, respect, and dignity while being assertive in professional setup. As such, academia leadership needs to refine skills such as team-building, mentoring, counseling etc. while exhibiting good managerial skills.

Conclusion

In the wake of this study, it is felt that assignment as an academia leader is a challenging one wherein they will have to satisfy the needs of varying stakeholders with different goals/objectives. This could be especially more challenging for a pure academician when he/she takes on the role of an administrator as both these roles demand different skill sets altogether. However, review of the current literature in this field reveals that such qualities/skills could be honed through appropriate leadership and management development programs specifically addressing the various types of skills requirement for academia leadership. In nutshell, if a leadership and management development program encompassing the skills such as (1) essence of leadership / management, (2) Presentation, (3) Negotiation, (4) Decision-Making, (5) Interpersonal, (6) Listening/Empathy, (7) Assertiveness, (8) Mentoring, (9) Counseling, and (10) Planning & Implementation, it would be of great help for the academician-turned-administrator to shoulder all relevant responsibility with more efficacy. With these skills developed, they will be able to meet the expectations of various stakeholders of the institution and thus exhibit the success of academia leaders.

Scope for further Research

In this study, it is only a conceptual model is proposed for necessary implementation. Empirical examination of this model and subsequent evaluation of such program for its effectiveness will pave the way for further refinement of the model. It is also possible to conduct an empirical study on the leadership styles of academia leadership to understand what factors are contributing to their success in this field. Such a study would also be useful for further refinement of the proposed model in this study.

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