Leadership in Educational Institutions: Opportunities and Challenges- Guiding the Way to 21st Century

22nd in the Senior Scholars' Seminar Series

April 29-30, 2015

Peer Reviewed Edited Proceedings

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Organised by

Themes of the Seminar & Papers

Leading towards Total Quality Management of Secondary Schools: An Attitudinal Study

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Abstract: Total Quality Management is been considered as an important tool to lead the change and achieve the objective of quality education. This paper attempts to study the attitude of teachers towards the total quality management. The sample of the study included 100 secondary school teachers. Researcher developed Attitude Scale was used as the tool. The Attitude Scale was a five point Rating scale having 50 statements. The study revealed that though teachers are considered as the prominent leaders towards bringing the quality change their overall attitude towards this quality change was quite low ranging from the mean score of 36 to 76 on different variables on a 250 point rating scale. Further no significant difference was found in the attitude of teachers belonging to rural and urban schools. Thus this study reveals that if the leaders of the institution really wish the teachers to lead the change towards quality management they need to develop a motivating socio emotional environment in the schools wherein the teachers consider quality initiatives as their leading responsibility.

Key Words: Total Quality Management, Leaders, Secondary Teachers, Attitude Scale

Introduction

The concept of leadership is defined variously by different leaders. The literature also exhibit wide variations in the meaning and concept of leadership. Leadership means enhancing potential (Biju R., 2000, p.167), by communicating clearly and effectively in a congenial environment. The leadership behavior comprises of three important activities - creating a holding environment, managing conflicts & shaping norms and maintaining presence and poise (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

Thus good leadership is about not only working towards the development of the institution but also towards the development of the people and life. When the leadership behavior in an educational institution is questioned the onus lies not only of managing

the resources effectively but also of developing the resource in such a manner that the objectives of holistic development of child are achieved. Various studies have established relationships between the leadership behavior and the achievement of the institution.

Facts about Achievement and Leadership

Over the past 20 years, Chicago Public Schools has experienced tremendous growth in graduation rates, but learning gains have been modest, according to a new report from the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research. The average levels of performance are unacceptably low in all areas where they have been studied. (Aikara 1997; Bashir 1994; Hasan 1995; Govinda and Varghese 1993; Roy, Mitra and Ray 1995; Agarwal 2000; Aggarwal and Chugh 2003; Varghese 1999; Jaylakshami 2001)

Math scores have improved incrementally in the elementary/middle grades, while elementary/middle grade reading scores have remained fairly flat for two decades. Racial gaps in achievement have steadily increased, with white and Asian students making more progress than Latino students, and African American students falling behind all other groups. The declining rates of achievement world over are an eye opener for researchers who feel that the educational institutions should aim at holistic development coupled with the increase in achievement.

A look at the studies on leadership reveals that in the last four years, more foundations have been investing in developing leadership capable of catalyzing and sustaining change. A wealth of leadership programs exist, supporting individuals, organizations, and communities to promote changes that will lead towards a more inclusive and just society and world. Leadership skills of institutional heads are being stressed upon because good leader can lead the institution to success. The operationalization of the word success may depict an entirely different picture. No doubts the institutions world over are succeeding in terms of visibility and performance but when the question is of educational institutions the success is to be measured in terms of achievement of students and the nature of institutional climate.

Some Objectives of Leadership Programs

- Acquiring Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, and Perceptions
- Changes in Behavior, Values and Beliefs
- Enhancing Organizational Leadership Capacity and Providing Opportuniti Youth
- Program Innovation and Expansion
- Changes in Organizational Functioning
- Improving overall achievement

The objectives listed above are a suggestive for educational institutions and it can b exhaustive list. The parameters for total quality management can be numerous and leader is the one that is at the center of the spiral to manage, assure and enhance qua

Quality concerns in Education

The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears on its abi to satisfy the stated or implied needs (BSI, 1991). Quality is a concept borrowed from t manufacturing industry. The aims of education reflect the needs and aspiration of t developing society. There is a need to align community desires with the human ide that may lead to the advent of a humane society. Quality is, meeting, exceeding al delighting customer's needs and expectations with the recognition that these needs ai desires will change over time, (Dewney et al. 1994).

In addition to the efforts made by the central and state governments in establishing number of schools all over the country, the different types of schools emerged in privat sector too, having more or less same educational objectives. These schools normall differ in their methods of teaching, infrastructural and man power facilities, curriculum medium of instruction, discipline, curricular and co-curricular activities, pedagogy syllabus, examinations and evaluation procedures, their affiliations and accreditation standards, etc. In order to have an idea about the quality dimensions in primary education, these differences need to be addressed carefully.

Quality Parameters from Teaching Learning Process Perspective

The important components of the school education system can be listed as:

- **Curriculum:** is the set of courses, and their content, offered at a school or university.
- **Syllabus:** is an outline and summary of topics to be covered in a course.
- **Examination:** is a detailed inspection or analysis of an object or person. They can be written tests, oral, or have practical components.
- **Curricular activities:** are integral to the classroom and result in a course grade and credit.
- **Co-Curricular activities:** are in addition to classroom instruction and are for all students whenever they are acting as a representative of the school (e.g. practices, games, trips, camps and tours, etc.). **Pedagogy:** is the scientific teaching/instruction strategy through which knowledge is imparted in the classroom. The term generally refers to strategies of instruction, or a style of instruction
- **Educational Accreditation:** "Educational accreditation is a type of quality assurance process under which services and operations of an educational institution or program are examined by a third-party accrediting agency to determine if applicable standards are met. Should standards be met, accredited status is granted by the agency." (Wikipedia)
- **Affiliation:** Affiliation is one possible way of getting formally associated with an organization or agency. School affiliation as such is a kind of partnership between the school and some other educational institution.

Quality Parameters from Planning Perspective

The concept of quality is prevalent since ancient India. In the contemporary world different perspectives on quality has given a new dimension to quality growth in education. The quality assurance procedures in educational institutions can enhance the worth of various process and procedures. This can than further help in establishing the standardized policies which can prove to be more objective in performance. These components can be measured under the quality parameters that can be listed as:

1. **Planning and Implementation:** Kothari Commission in 1964 and National Policy in Education in 1986 have accepted the importance of **Planning** in educational

institutions. Institutional planning is a program of development and improvement prepared by an educational institution on the basis of its felt needs and the resources available or likely to be available, with a view to improving the school program and school practices. It is based on the principle of optimum utilization of the resources available in the school and the community (Buch M.B.). This planning can be used to improve the quality of teaching learning process, administrative process, curricular and co-curricular activities. The planning can be short and long term. Effective planning increases the efficiency and chances of success during the implementation phase.

2. **Classroom Interaction and Evaluation:** Teaching learning process in classroom is a multipolar process. Effective classroom interaction is responsible for creating a positive classroom climate that further enhances the quality of interaction. Evaluation is an important component in the overall education process since it is responsible for producing evidences for effectiveness of teaching learning process. Quality in the evaluation process that enhances objectivity, equity and the rightful measurement of the outcome is a must.

3. **Participation:** The changing perspective towards the education system has introduced the importance of the stakeholders. Their participation and the feedback is considered as a must in increasing the quality of the process.

Review

This came to be known as "Quality Control". The table below gives chronology of Quality movement. Dimensions of Quality in Higher education Quality was originally developed in manufacturing industry. In area of higher education, the adoption of quality control has been superficial and diluted by the exercise of academic freedom (Largosen, et el, 2004). Further, the prevailing culture of universities is often based on individual autonomy which is zealously guarded (Colling and Harvey, 1995). Thus, it is usually difficult to apply the features of quality to higher education considering the fact that quality requires team work (Boaden and Dale, 1992).

Table 1: The chronology of quality movement

Pre 1900	Quality as an integral element of craftsmanship
1900-1920	Quality control by foreman
1920-1940	Inspection based quality control
1940-1960	Statistical Process Control
1960-1980	Quality assurance / Total Quality Control
1980-1990	Total Quality Management
1990-Present	TQM, the culture of continuous improvement, organization-wide quality management

Source: Sallis (1996)

However, the quality of higher education is very important for its stake holders. Notably, providers (funding bodies and the community at large), students, staff and employers of graduates are important (Srikanthan and Dalrymple, 2003). The most commonly used dimensions of quality in higher education are product, software and service (Owlia and Aspinwall, 1996)

Table 2: Product dimensions of quality in higher education

Dimensions	Definition in higher education
Performance	Primary knowledge/skills required for graduates
Features	Secondary/Supplementary knowledge and skills
Reliability	The extent to which knowledge/skills learned are correct, accurate and up to date Conformance The degree to which an institutional programme/course meets established standards, plans and promises
Durability	The depth of learning
Serviceability	How well an institution handles customer's complaints?

Source: Owlia and Aspinwall (1996)

The characteristics of software as an intangible product are more consistent with higher education. The software quality dimensions widely used in software engineering are:

reliability, efficiency, integrity, usability, maintainability, testability, expandability, portability (Watts, 1987).

Service quality dimensions

The service dimension of quality is probably more akin to education processes. Unlike physical goods services are ephemeral to the extent that they can be consumed only as long as the activity or process continues. Thus there is inseparability of production and consumption. Thus, services can't be stored and are perishable. The consumer is also an integral part of the service process. Thus, in education this framework can be applied in teaching and learning situations. Parasuramanet el (1995) identified the following dimensions of service quality

Table 3: Service quality dimensions

Dimensions	Definition in education
Responsiveness	Willing and readiness of staff to help students
Reliability	The degree to which education is correct, accurate and up to date
Understanding customers	Understanding students and their needs
Access	The extent to which staff are available for guidance and advice
Competence	The theoretical and practical knowledge of staff and other presentation Skills
Courtesy	Emotive and positive attitude towards students
Communication	How well the students and lecturers communicate in the class
Credibility	The degree of trustworthiness of institution
Security	Confidentiality of information
Tangible	State, sufficiency and availability of equipment and facilities
Performance	Primary knowledge/skills required for graduates
Completeness	Supplementary knowledge/skills, use of computer

Source: Owlia and Aspinwall (1996)

The Study Objectives

1. To study the attitude of teachers of Secondary Schools towards total quality management.

2. To find out the difference between the attitude of teachers of rural and urban schools.

Hypothesis

Ho₁ There shall be no significant difference between the mean scores of attitude scale to assess the attitude towards total quality management.

Sample

The study was conducted on 100 secondary school teachers. 50 teachers each from 10 rural schools and 10 urban schools were selected randomly.

Method

The study was conducted by Survey Method. The secondary school teachers were contacted. The objectives of the study were explained to them and after taking their consent they were given the attitude scalefor Total Quality Management for recording their responses.

Tool- Attitude Scale for Total Quality Management

The scale was prepared by Likert Rating Scale Method. The tool contained 80 items in the pre pilot phase. Reliability of the scale was established and the final test contained 50 items out of which 25 were negative and 25 positive. Attitude Scale measured three components: Planning and Implementation, Classroom Behavior and Evaluation and Participation in Community.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using t test.

Area	Sample Size	Mean	S.D.	t value	Significance Level
Rural	50	36.23	6.63	1.27	N.S
Urban	50	37.32	5.45		

Results

1. Mean range of attitude towards total quality management was 36 to 72 on a rating scale of 250 point. This range signifies that the attitude of secondary school teachers towards total quality management is very low.

2. No significant difference was found between the attitude of teachers of rural and urban schools.

Conclusion

The economic, social, cultural and technological changes contribute to the society a great many things. The process of education should reflect those changes and develop capacities to imbibe those changes. The quality studies conducted reflect a sorry image of the educational institutions and teachers. The secondary school teachers do not show a positive attitude towards total quality management. The teachers had low attitude on all the three variables viz. Planning and Implementation, Classroom Behavior and Evaluation and Participation.

Thus in order to lead academic institutions towards Total Quality Management of the leaders need to look beyond leading the institutions. They have onus not only of planning and organizing but also of leading the main goal of education that is empowerments of students with knowledge. There should be a commitment on the part of the management as well as the leaders to create awareness and motivate the teachers to play a positive role in quality initiatives.

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