



## Qualities of an Academic Leader - A Critical View

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**ABSTRACT**

Education is considered to be a very important component in the growth and development of society, state, country and the world. Without providing quality education the overall growth cannot be assured and achieved. Today, many types of educational organizations are imparting knowledge to their students in a different manner. The educational institutions must be made to move in the right direction to achieve the mission for which these educational institutions are meant for. This needs a kind of leadership which creates an environment to not only get the objectives of the institution, but also develop a culture where the all the members of the organization are committed to achieve excellence. The work presented in this paper explores in detail the qualities and attributes which an academic leader must possess to make the institution great for mankind. It has been summarized that if all of the discussed twenty qualities are inbuilt in an academic leader then one can drive an educational institution to achieve its mission.

**KEYWORDS : Academic Leader, Qualities****Introduction**

Education is a fundamental component in the development and growth of any country. It can be seen that the way of imparting education in developed countries is different than that in developing ones. In today's age the developing countries (Like India) need to review and change the methodologies and techniques used to provide the education not only in the higher levels like universities, but also at the school and college level. This requires that a clear mission and objective must be set and to achieve the same accurate vision is required. But it seems extremely difficult to get the goals and objectives in education without appropriate guidance and direction. In view of these issues effective leadership is required by different educational institutes in order to revive and renovate the methods and techniques for imparting education.

**Leadership**

Leadership can be defined as the ability to motivate and influence others in a way to achieve organizational goals and objectives [1]. Effective leadership is the key to success for any organization. There are several dimensions of leadership, but *Attainment of Goals and Objectives* is the primary one and of course the leaders are meant for the same. In educational institutions leadership plays an important role in order to provide quality education to the students and create a learning environment which encourages not only the students but also the faculty and staff members. In today's age the education has changed a lot with new methods and techniques and this change leads to the need of a new kind of leadership in academics. The next section of the paper illustrates the leadership in academic institutions.

**Leadership in Education – Academic Leadership**

In any educational institution many activities are carried out throughout an academic session, including both the academic activities (like creation of time table, conduction of classes, student assessment, etc.) and administrative activities (like registration of students, conduction of examination, declaring results etc.). For any academic organization, it is extremely important to plan and execute these activities in a very systematic manner. This requires supervision and direction of an individual who acts as a leader.

*Academic Leadership* in an academic institution can be defined as the capability to effectively carry out all the activities in an academic session at the same time to make sure that quality education is being provided to the students and learning environment is built where not only students but also the faculty members are motivated towards continuous improvement and innovation. To understand academic leadership more clearly it is important to analyze the role of an academic leader in an institution.

**Role of an Academic Leader**

Role of a leader is closely related to one's activities and behavior which one shows. Firstly, as an individual an academic leader must display the qualities and attributes which motivates others (students,

teachers and staff). This role is very important for an academic leader because the things one will do, there is a greater chance that the same will be followed by the others. Secondly, as an administrator and manager an academic leader must be a good decision maker, monitor, mentor, communicator, team builder and most importantly must have a vision to achieve the mission and objectives of the institution [2]. And finally, as an academic mentor an academic leader must displays his mentoring and guiding skills to the member of faculty and students. This is the key component of academic leadership and it can be seen and observed in many educational institutes that if proper academic mentoring is not present then mission and objectives of the institution cannot be met.

**Qualities of an Academic Leader**

This section of the paper analyzes in detail, what qualities must be embedded within an academic leader to make him great for an educational institute. Broadly speaking the qualities of an academic leader can be divided into three dimensions (Fig.1) namely Personal Traits, Managerial Skills and Academic Mentoring. Each dimension has a set of attributes which a leader in an academic institution must possess.

**Fig.1: Qualities of an Academic Leader****A. Personal Traits**

Personal traits are the attributes of an individual which are inbuilt and are displayed as an integral part of one's personality. The personal traits which an academic must have are:

1. *Honest*: Honesty is important for any leader. If the leader in an organization is dishonest than it is the curse for the organization. Honesty must be embedded in an academic leader.

2. *Confident*: An academic leader must be confident to make decisions of his/her own and must trust his actions and decisions.

3. *Rational*: A leader in academics should not be partial and must make decisions logically. It is seen in many educational institutes (especially private) the leaders are not rational and they make decisions and take actions which may harm the organizational growth, objectives and goals.

4. *Transparent*: An academic leader must be transparent enough so that his/her actions are visible to all. If academic leaders are not transparent, then they may lose trust from other persons in the institute which may lead to their failure.

5. *Positive Attitude*: This is an important attribute that an individual must possess. As an academic leader one must be positive in all circumstances and must motivate others to become positive always.

6. *Proactive Individual*: A leader must take initiatives by his/her own in order to move the institution in the right direction. He/she shouldn't wait for others for taking initiatives and giving new ideas.

## B. Managerial Skills

Besides an effective individual an academic leader must possess excellent managerial and administrative qualities. The managerial attributes required by an academic leader are:

1. *Good Administrator*: An effective leader should have outstanding administrative skills as the same are necessary to carry out and monitor different activities in an institution.

2. *Effective Communicator*: A leader in an educational organization must be able to communicate his/her thoughts, ideas, approaches, processes and actions effectively to all members of the institute. This trait is very important for an academic leader. It may be observed that in some institutions there is lack of proper and clear communication which leads to chaos in many situations.

3. *Decision Maker*: Clear decision making is an art of a leader and must be inbuilt in an academic leader. One must be capable of taking hard decision when the complicated situation arises.

4. *Accountable*: An academic leader must be accountable for the actions and decision taken by him/her.

5. *Team Builder*: Teamwork is essential to make an organization successful. Academic leader should encourage the individuals to work as a group or team to execute different activities and tasks in achieving goals.

6. *Responsible*: One must have a sense of responsibility that his/her decisions and actions may affect the organizational goals and objectives.

7. *Visionary Leader*: Every educational institution has a vision and mission. An academic leader must have the wisdom to think out of the box and plan for the future.

8. *Continuous Improvement*: This is the most important attribute that an academic leader must possess. One must learn from past experiences and then take appropriate measures and steps to improve. This is the way by which an institution can evolve and provide quality to its members.

## C. Academic Mentoring

In an educational institution a leader is incomplete if he/she does not have mentoring and guiding abilities. Academic mentoring is the inclusiveness, commitment, dedication and supervision towards teaching and research. This makes a leader suitable for an academic institution. The attributes which an academic mentor must have are:

1. *Academic Knowledge*: An academic leader must have knowledge of the procedures followed in an academic institution, since the working of an educational institute is entirely different than any other organization. Without academic knowledge the mission of the institution can get affected.

2. *Teaching and Research Skills*: A leader in academics must have excellent teaching and research skills since in today's age teaching and research is an integral part of any academic institute. If one is not having teaching and research skills then chances are very less that he/she is an effective academic leader [3].

3. *Commitment and Dedication*: An academic leader must be committed and dedicated to impart quality education to the students and motivate all members of the institute towards continuous improvement.

4. *Inclusion*: A leader in academic institution must have a sense of involvement and inclusion within the structure of the organization. This inclusion provides cohesion between the leader and the people of the institute which is important. The leader must be involved deeply in all the academic activities in the institute.

5. *Experience*: An academic leader must have sufficient experience in academic environment. Academic experience is an important factor in the academic leadership skills because a leader from any other background may not effectively provide the direction which an academic institution needs.

6. *Role Model*: A role model is an individual whose behavior, activities and actions are emulated by other people [4]. A leader in academics must set the examples that should be followed by other members of the institution. This attribute has significant impact on the mission and objectives of an academic organization.

## Conclusion

Without effective academic leadership an academic institution will not grow and the mission and objectives may not be met. This paper explores the quality attributes mentioned under three dimensions namely personal traits, managerial skills and academic mentoring, that an academic leader must possess so that the mission and objectives of the academic institution can be met. This work presented in this paper has significant importance for academic leaders and the researchers who are working in the area of academic leadership.

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