



## Excellence in Higher Education: Link With College Principals' Leadership Styles

### KEYWORDS

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If excellence in higher education is to be achieved, of all the input resources human resource including the principals' and the teachers' should be paid greatest attention, Excellence in higher education ultimately, linked with teachers' performance, an outcome of their job satisfaction, high morale, high commitment and other behavioural characteristics, which, in many researches, have been found to be greatly influenced by the leadership styles of principals'. The paper discusses various theories of leadership and leadership styles and their impact on teachers various characteristics. A brief review of researches done in India and other countries has also been presented. This includes discussion of Haplin's model, Blake and Mouton's grid model, transactional and transformational leadership styles, and their impact on teachers' behavioural characteristics. It is recommended that research in this area, which is very, much lacking in India, should be pursued more vigorously in years to come.

Higher education is "fundamental to all round-development, material and spiritual" (NPE-86, p.3). It is considered a "unique investment in the present and the future". But in order to make it play its role, it is important that it should be handled properly, which, at present, is not being done in India. It is held by many that higher education in India is a highly mismatched affair, though our Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's dream idea was to make India a "knowledge superpower"(2007). Not that effort to this end has been made, in the past few decades many reforms such as privatization of higher education, examination reforms, change in admission procedures, accreditation of colleges and universities, NET examination, NAAC evaluation of colleges and universities, forcing professors to put 40 hours presence in the campus, point-based promotion of college and university teachers, etc. have been made. Yet the situation is going from bad to worse. "Higher education is a sick child of education", said Sri Arjun Singh in 2007. Mungeskar (2007) said that not more than 9 to 10 percent graduates are employable. The Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh said, "India produces around 25 lakhs of graduates, but the quality is so poor that only a quarter of them are employable" (15<sup>th</sup> Aug. 2007).

In 2007 out of 3492 colleges evaluated by NAAC, 90 percent were found to be second grade and some in very bad condition. In the process of education several variables are involved which determine, partially or wholly, the quality of higher education. Government's policies and decisions along with educational leaders' leadership styles, functioning of various regulatory bodies, monetary and material resources and, ultimately, the human factor all are important role players in determining quality of higher education. Of all these human factor is most important. It

is the factor that is most versatile and cuts across all other factors and conditions. It is the men and women, human beings at all stages who use effectively or ineffectively all other input resources of higher education for producing desirable output. Hence excellence in higher education is unavoidably linked with manipulation and management of these men and women, the human resource which at the moment is very poor rather anti productive.

Excellence in higher education implies increasing the quality of teaching, learning, and research in the universities and colleges, more so in colleges. There are more than 20 thousand colleges in India. The way the task is managed in these colleges will determine overall quality of higher education. This, obviously, brings into focus the fact of strengthening the leadership in these colleges. Looking from this point of view it seems reasonable to believe that excellence in higher education is very much a function of college principals' leadership styles. Principals of colleges have long been regarded to play the role of leadership in education. Their leadership styles determine how college teachers and other employees are involved in the performance of the task. The ground level reality is that it is the college teacher who holds the key to quality education. If college teachers are competent, efficient, committed to the job and the profession, have interest and are motivated, have better work values, job satisfaction, high morale and good friendly relations among themselves and with the principal, this will definitely contribute to excellence in higher education. For generating and maintaining these behavioral characteristics of teachers, the college principals must have and use relevant leadership styles. Research has demonstrated that principals' leadership styles have positive impact on college teachers' behavioral characteristics.

Saucer (2011) confirms the importance of leadership and its effect on the performance of employees. His study explained how the leaders' performance style affects the organization. Danish et.al. (2011) Discussed the effect of leadership and a manager's style showing that these had a significant effect on the administration and its effectiveness. Considering the principal as the leader of the group of college teachers and one responsible for achieving the goals of collegiate education, various leadership theories giving rise to specific leadership styles have been identified and discussed by research scientists. They have studied the impact of these different styles on a large number of behavioral characteristics of college teachers. They have demonstrated which style is more or less effective for developing which characteristic. In a study by Heba Al Fadah and Associates (2013) positive correlation was found between principals transformational leadership style and teachers achievement motivation, an essential condition

for achieving the goals of higher education. Burns (1978) was the first to define the transformational and transactional leadership styles. Neider and Schriesheim (2002) said that transformational leaders have the ability to develop the vision of their employees, encourage them, and raise their morale. They inspire trust in those they are leading. According to Akpa et.al. (2011) They motivate the followers by making them aware of the importance of the task outcome. Transactional leaders focus on results and performance. They motivate employees through rewards and bonuses and also punishment if they do it wrong (Alomri 2009). These leaders are good at making issues clear, but they lack some positive skills such as giving attention to the needs of followers. The study made by AYDIN SARIER and UYSAL (2013) revealed that transformational leadership style affected job satisfaction and organizational commitment of teachers in a positive way.

Leadership literature has rich tradition of conceptualizing leadership typologies. In a typical typology leaders behaviors are theoretically clustered into prominent types of leadership styles. As known, path-goal theory has identified four distinct styles of leader behavior or styles. These include (a) directive, (b) supportive (c) achievement-oriented and (d) participative leadership styles. There is empowering leadership also which is the extent to which the managers attain desired objectives by leaving subordinates to make their own decisions, share a consensual decision making process with their subordinates to achieve their objectives. Both the empowering leadership style and transformational styles are found to have positive relation with subordinates satisfaction, commitment, communication, and effectiveness (Galanov Ekaterini, 2010). Charismatic theory of leadership emphasizes the intrinsic reward of work, de-emphasize the extrinsic rewards, express high expectations, and help followers to gain a sense of confidence and self-efficiency. The quadrant style posited in the Ohio State Study (Halpin, 1956), English and Anderson, (2005) as with Blake and Mouton (1964) classifies leadership behaviors in two dimensions- (a) consideration (people oriented or human factor) and (b) initiating structure (task oriented). Based on these, leadership styles are classified as (i) high concern for people, low concern for task (Blake and Mouton's 1,9 style, (ii) low concern for people, high concern for task (Blake and Mouton's 9,1 style or authoritarian style, (iii) moderate concern for people and the task both (Blake and Mouton's 5,5 style). (iv) Minimum concern for people and minimum concern for the task (Blake and Mouton's 1,1 style, or (impoverished style), (v) high concern for task and people both (Blake and Mouton's 9,9 style). According to the authors of managerial grid, the manager's work is most effective when people feel that they are the part of the organization. Blake and Mouton's 9,9 style of leadership is said to be the ideal style which should be every principal's pursuit, though it is difficult to follow in all situations.

Studies on link between principals' leadership behaviors and several institutional variables have been made in India also. Most of these studies however are founded on trait theory of leadership (Patel, 1974), Mahant, 1979, Singh, 1978, Kaushik, 1995, G.P. Gupta, 1978, Mahajan, 1970, Naik, 1982, Darji (1975), Shukla (1983), Desai (1979), Amita Shukla (1980). Alka Agarwal (1989), however, used Halpin's two-dimensional leadership style theory, i.e., consideration and initiating structure styles extended by Blake and Mouton. It is difficult to summarize the conclusions of these studies as they have concerned themselves about a variety of aspects of principals' administrative behavior and their

administrative effectiveness. Obviously, it seems important to relate other modern theories and their styles to institutional variables such as college culture and climate, teachers morale, job satisfaction, professional commitment, work values, institutional effectiveness. Empowering leadership styles, transformational styles, and Blake and Mouton's 9,9, 9,1, 1,9, and 5,5 styles, which particularly, may be considered more meaningful in this context. At the moment no body knows what are more prevalent administrative styles among college principals in India. Studies aiming at identifying more frequently used styles and their linkage with various institutional variables and teachers' desirable behaviors should in future be considered highly meaningful and beneficial.

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