



## Are all Institutional Heads Leaders ?

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**ABSTRACT**

Every institution needs a leading individual. In today's dynamic world we need heads with visions and the charisma to carry those visions out. An effective school has a climate that is purposeful and orderly, has high standards of performance, has a clear sense of mission and has strong goal and achievement- oriented leadership. Not all heads possess all the leaders' traits. Honesty, Strategic vision, emotional intelligence, self-confidence, healthy social relationships and recognition for good work are some of the qualities of a good leader. Decision making function resides in the leader in autocratic style. But heads can be made into leaders by training and equipping them with the skills to cope. This paper deals with the qualities of a leader, and how institutional heads become effective leaders.

**KEYWORDS**

Charisma, Emotional intelligence, Autocratic leader, Compassionate actions

"Leaders are born and not made" was a belief dating back to the ancient Greeks and Romans (Prasad, 1988). A leader is a person who knows the way, shows the way and goes the way (Thomas, 2008). A leader is a goal-setter, planner, executive, expert, group representative, administrator of rewards and punishments and a symbol of the group (Jenning, 1961). Leaders are those persons who are perceived to be intelligent, strong, aggressive, understanding, industrious and so on, these being the traits (Lord, 1986). A high self-monitoring person, one who is more flexible and adapting to situations is more likely to emerge as a successful leader (Dobbins, 1990).

**Qualities of a leader**

Temkin (1994) says that the important qualities to be possessed by the leader would be vision, sense of reality, ethics, courage, commitment and cooperation. Selvarajah (1995) in a research to study the perceptions of excellence in leadership reports that the quality ranked first was honesty, followed by strategic vision and recognition for good work. The other qualities included were confidence in dealing with people, motivating employees, continuous learning, time management, listening, a sense of purpose and strategy. Davis (1972) identified four qualities, which according to him were important for a leader. They were intelligence, social maturity and breadth, inner motivation and achievement drive and human relations attitude. Kirk Patrick & Locke (1991) said that there were six traits by which leaders are distinguished-ambition and energy, the desire to lead, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, intelligence and job relevant knowledge. Robert J House (1977) indicates that leaders may have certain characteristics such as being self-confident, having strong convictions, articulating a vision, are able to initiating change, communicating high expectations, having a need to influence followers and supporting them, demonstrating enthusiasm and excitement, and are in touch with reality.

A leader must possess the ability to inspire and motivate. A leader must be capable of influencing and must be accountable. The leader must possess ability to facilitate and also be a negotiator. He should possess the ability to manage time and be effective in interpersonal skills. A leader must possess the ability to reward and be optimistic and be positive. He should be able to build teams. A leader needs to be aware of his environment to tackle complex situations by speedier and quality solutions (Upinderdhan & Mishra, 2001). A leader with certain traits may be successful in a particular situation, but fail in

another and not all leaders possess all the leaders' traits, and many non-leaders may possess most or all of them.

Daniel Goleman (1998) states effective leaders have high degree of emotional intelligence. Successful leaders know how to stimulate the positive trends and avoid the undesirable trends to drive the direction of the environment, rather than being driven by it (Sadler, 2001).

**Institutional heads as leaders**

As the success of any institution depends upon the quality of its leadership, the effectiveness of the school too depends upon the leadership style of its head. There are documented evidences to show that a strong principal is one of the traits common to effective schools (Vanzanton, 1989). According to Vernotica (1989), a common element of school effectiveness studies is that of strong leadership. These studies suggest that leadership by the school principal is characteristic of effective schools. He explored the behaviour of principal's goal clarity, goal related interaction and principal-teacher consensus on student achievement. Concurrently, it explains how a principal can use a reflective process to track, monitor and locate change.

The leader should provide central coordination for the activities of an organization such as an educational institution (Arulraj, 2002). Without leadership an institution is a bundle of men and machines. Leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically. Management activities are dormant cocoons until the leader triggers the power of motivation in people and guide them toward goals. Leadership transforms potential into reality (Davis, 1972). Leadership is one factor that can make or break an institution. Institutions without good leaders will very soon be fossilized (Jayaraj, 2003).

**Leaders can be made**

For any successful institution, dynamic and effective leadership is needed. According to Hersey & Blanchard (1992), the successful organization has one major attribute that sets it apart from unsuccessful organizations; dynamic and effective leadership. Educational institutions should be managed by exemplary leaders to improve the quality of education. Fiedler (1996) arguing that the effectiveness of a leader is a major determinant of the success or failure of a group, organization, or even an entire country.

Brown (1992) observes that good leaders need to develop the skills that enable them to alter aspects of their culture in order to improve their organizational performance. Nair (1999) says that the provision of mentors facilitates new entrants to accommodate them personally and professionally. Well planned leadership and responsibility practices, monitoring performance continuously, developing managerial competence, use of career templates, cultivating learning culture initiate growth of the organization. Stein (1984) says that leadership courses can only teach skills. Developing character and vision is the way leaders invent themselves.

Leadership is the lever to lifting of man's visions to higher sights, to build man's personality beyond its normal limitations. Leadership beginning with the 'character' of leaders, expressed in terms of personal values, self-awareness and moral capability (Adrie et al., 2001). Good leaders are informed by and communicate clear sets of personal and educational values which represent their moral purposes for the school (Okumbe, 1998). As Benis (1989) feels, a leader is not a pusher, he pulls rather than pushes.

Every institution needs a leading individual not merely to see that it carries out its functions on the lines laid down with the object of implementing the policy already determined, but also to provide with inspiration to develop and maintain its morale (Drucker, 2003). Effective leadership is much more than mere giving of orders. Effective heads today must develop trusting relationships with those whom they seek to lead because as institutions have become less stable and predictable, strong bonds of trust are likely replacing bureaucratic rules in defining expectation and relationships. Institutional heads who aren't trusted, aren't likely to be effective leaders (Sergiovanni, 1992).

#### To Conclude ...

Institutions need strong leadership and strong management for optimal effectiveness. In today's dynamic world, we need heads to challenge the status quo, to create visions of the future and to inspire institutional members to want to achieve the visions. We also need institutional heads to formulate detailed plans, create efficient organizational structures, and oversee day to day operations. So institutions are increasingly searching for heads who can exhibit transformational leadership qualities. They want heads with visions and charisma to carry those visions out. And although true leadership may be a result of exhibiting the right behaviours at the right time, the evidence is quite strong that people have a relatively uniform perception of what a leader should look like. They attribute 'leadership' to people who are smart, personable, verbally adept, and the like. To the degree that heads project these qualities, others are likely to deem them leaders.

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