

21st Century Challenges of Educational Leaders, way out and Need of Reflective Practice

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Abstract:

The chief idea of accomplishing this study is to recognize the challenges in front of educational leaders. Different leadership theories are argued in this piece of paper to elucidate the need of leadership and reflective practice for the educational leaders particularly in 21st century. In 21st century finest leader and coaches are essential in management as well as for the swift intensification of the education sector. Study shows that in the forthcoming era, educational leaders are mostly required rather than professional teachers. The concepts and importance of need of educational leaders are described by means of different theories and models. In this study, researchers pin point the unusual plane of awareness of internal and external nature of leadership is deliberate crucial role that leads to better suspicion to acquire

the right judgment. Awareness also considered very important factor for effective decision making.

Keywords: Educational leader, Leadership, Critical reflection, coach, 21st century challenges

Background:

There are thousands of research related to leadership and educational leadership having inconsistent results (Yukl, 2006). Numerous leadership theories and styles have been developed that resulted from the scholars and practitioner's desire to understand, define and explain the importance of leadership. Situational factors and skills levels factors are looked by the consequent leadership theories, focused on what are the qualities that create a difference between leaders and followers. Everybody should at least agree on the fact that no one style of leadership is panacea to all situation and time. This 21st century is the era of uncertainty, chaos and complexities. In this article researcher will discuss some of the issues to be addressed by 21st century educational leaders, action to be taken to address those issues and proposed a blending of Grenleaf's 'servant leader' as 'Super leader' to prepare a team of 'self-leaders' as the means of achieving the objective/goals or addressing those issues. Researchers also describe the role of reflective practices and introinspection as a means to enhance the leadership quality of self leader and super leader.

Short review of progress and development of leadership theories:

Researchers are trying to describe leadership by suing history. Earlier, before late 1940s, great man theorist and the trait theorist have a belief on that abilities which describe the leader are inborn. On the basis of own intelligence, appearance and communication skills, it is considered that people become leaders. (Bolden et al., 2003). Behavioral theorist from late 1940s to 1960s claimed that effectiveness of leadership is straightforwardly associated to the leader's behavior. Contingency theorist maintained that leadership effectiveness dependents on the situation and a fastidious style of leadership are suitable in certain situation but not essentially at all (Bolden et al., 2003; Dereli, 2003). Recent theories about leadership have arrangement with apparition and charisma. Among current ones transactional, transformational and transcendental leadership are relatively newer one (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). The concept of leadership moves from single, individual, principal leadership to a collaborative, distributive and democratic leadership, there are several contemporary leadership styles in educational institution and system too (Hoy & Miskel, 2001; Dereli, 2003).

In 1990s, Bolman and Deal (1991) developed four frames for leaderships. First structural frames which focal point on importance of proper roles and relationships in organizational structure. Second is human resource frame which imagine organizations as a fit of needs, feelings and interests of human resources. Third the political frames which is near to politico-conflict approach where resource is always scarce and power centre has access to scarce resources so organization moves in power balance. Symbolic frame which is near to humanist theories which focuses on meaning, belief and faith and organization as exceptional cultures which have practices, heroes, mythologies and ceremonies,. The essential segment of

framework thinking is leader should know which frame is to apply in specific situations (Bolman & Deal, 1991 as cited in Dareli, 2003).

Challenges of 21st century for educational leadership:

Globalization and cultural blend:

Worldwide convergence and integration of education system with increasing mobility of students, researchers, teaching staff and institutional leaders and emerging market of academicians and researchers in international arena has compelled the educational leader to adopt global educational curriculum along with the need and demand of local markets (Reimers, 2006). This in one hand has expanded the scope of massive educational production while in the under-developed and developing countries like ours, out-migration of high-skilled human capital has created the condition of brain drain as a kind of warning too (Bhattarai, 2009; Dhungel, 2010).

Globalization and migration of academicians, researchers and students leads to cultural blend, cultural fusion and emergence of new culture. For school leaders, trying to understand all of the various cultures and perspectives of all students and their families seems an impossible and unending task (Shields & Sayani, 2005). The need to deal with conflict and tension as well as all of the other competing demands seems overwhelming. This is one of the prime challenges to be faced by 21st century leaders.

Ever changing technologies:

Twenty first century has been regarded as the age of science and technology. Technology has been regarded as one of the vital change agents of education sector today (Fullan, 2007). The rapid progress of technology and globalization has narrowed the world into a small place. The challenging aspect of technologies is its ever changing and progressing nature and competition among the technology service provider. Keeping ourselves up-to-date with changing technology is very much important. Institutions lagging behind in technological sector are unable to face the pace of the world.

Education as a public good or commodities:

There seems an ever ending debate on education as a public good or commodities. Some strongly take education as public goods and think government is responsible for education of its people while other take it as commodities. Whatever said and done, in most of the countries there are several private educational institution which is providing education as commodities. In our country, if we go through policy documents, it can be perceived that school education is a public good and higher education is as commodities. However, till two decades back, most of the higher education was under “Tribhuvan University” and cost of higher education was very much subsidized. Till that time it was perceived as public good. Now, the secondary education is in cost distribution approach and higher education as cost revival approach (Khanal & Acharya, 2063 BS). Emergence of different private schools,

Montessori, colleges and even universities has strengthened the thoughts of education as commodities.

Similarly, the debate of education as commodities or public goods brings a question of equity in education. Socially marginalized and economically deprived groups of people or children must not be neglected by the school or educational system. As an educational leader, the principle of school as an agent for reducing social and economic inequality should take the initiative to cater to the needs of these children.

Any way 'Maximize the profit:

The excess competition in the local and global market has brought the concept of total quality management (TQM), customer satisfaction as a goal to succeed in any industry whether it is a manufacturer or service provider or education institution. As, world 2nd richest person of the year 2009, Walter buffet shares that he has only two rules for success which he shares with all his CEOs and fellow executives. The first rule is: 'Don't lose shareholder money'. And the second: 'Don't forget rule number one' (CNN TV interview, 2010, date unknown). In this world of economy, the main aim of any organization is maximize the profit. And the concept of education as commodities and education-institutions as business houses also has put pressure on educational leader of such institution to run for 'Any-way maximizes the profit'. But, it's not so easy. Schools and all academic institutions are very different from business enterprises as they are dealing with the "shaping" of human beings and by that you are shaping the society (Kanga & Kandeniyi, 2005). Dewey urged educators and others to recognize the moral responsibility of the school to society, saying:

'The school is fundamentally an institution erected by society to do a certain specific work—to exercise a certain specific function in maintaining the life and advancing the welfare of society.' *The educational system which does not recognize this fact is a defaulter and derelict of ethical responsibility'. (Quoted in Hickman & Alexander, 1998, p. 246 as cited in Kanga and Kandeniyi, 2005)*

Therefore, an interpretation of effectiveness would very much differ from effectiveness in any other system. So, the kind of leadership theories and models we need are those that really address the human nature with its sophistication. So, for 21st century leadership to be effective leaders among those dilemmas is really tough.

Leading at the age of Chaos:

Apart from above themes there are several other challenges like School Safety and Violence Prevention, Unhealthy competition and media violence, growing demand of extra effort for students leading to elevated stress level of the students, individual interest and need of different students to be addressed through flexible curriculum, which itself is a tough task (Lamichanne, 2010). There is daily debate, confrontation, dilemmas and cognitive dissonance about morality and ethical issues. As it seems the morality and ethics also changes with time and situation. After analyzing all the above mention themes and situation, we all will agree that

we are at ages of chaos. Managing all these is what is called leading at edge of chaos as defined by Stuart Kauffman. He defines it as the regime of system behavior that exists between order and chaos, and where the system operates at optimal level (Van Eijnatten & Putnik, 2004; Wah, 1998).

Hargrove and Prasad (2010) have nicely presented the scenario of the 21st century school education as:

Twenty-first century classrooms are likely to be quite different from those many teachers experienced themselves. For example, they are more diverse in a variety of ways. ... Diversity is a reality, making it another reality that schools must be committed to becoming places where children from 3 to 17 have the opportunity to learn. In order to do this, teachers cannot teach as they were taught; they must update their current practices in regard to changing school populations, increasing technology, and new ideas about how children learn. (Hargrove, & Prasad, 2010, p. 5)

All these changes have led to increased pressure on education leaders, more particularly on the principals to get results across a variety of situations. In the changing scenario, new landscapes of connections, which cannot be exhibited by cause and effect relations, need to be focused. The leaders as an effective change agent have to emphasis on the need for understanding the entire dynamics within organization and whole education system. It is crucial to acknowledge new way of understanding fluctuations, disorder, and change. To this end, “understanding of the connectivity between order and chaos is essential”. For change and progress, association between these forces is vital. (Lamichhane, 2011).

How to address the issue?

Goodwin (2002) from his empirical mixed method study describes the changing role of the secondary principals in the American schools and has identified forty-five descriptors of the principal's changing role. The findings demonstrated that principals perceive significant changes in their role in the following four areas: Strategic Leadership, Organizational Leadership, Instructional Leadership, and Political & Community Leadership. In recent years, the context of educational leaders' work has increased in complexity, which has led to changing expectations of what leaders need to know and be able to do. The context within which school leaders work has been characterized by increasing complexity in one hand, and increasing expectations from parents on the other, and consequently greater demands for accountability. In the progressively more composite world of education the work of leadership will engage dissimilar types of expertise and forms of leadership supple enough to assemble changing challenges and novel demands (Bush, 2009). So, to be flexible in one hand and achieving the goal in next, the leaders should be clear about ‘What to achieve?’

Educational leaders, may it be Principal leader or teacher leader now have to think of giving direction to the followers, society and even to the world. The main objective in this globalize context should be sustainable development and work together to turn the world as a better place to live in. No one will object in this. So what should be done to do so? For this, we

have to think globally but have to work locally. So now, I think the main objective of 21st century leaders is to instill democratic habits which will in long run prepare them to respect others' work, thoughts, human rights and views of world (Reimers, 2006) and move on doing their work they have chosen for sustainable development which in turn achieve global objective of peace, prosperity and better world to live in. This is not an easy task. It's a team work; researchers have to admit a global team work. Now the educational leaders have to work on developing team, team at local level, actual physically existing team and virtual team. Virtual teams are important because of their capability to overpass discontinuities of time and geography to enable access to and transfer of knowledge across geographic and organizational boundaries, thus leveraging human and intellectual capital (Duarte & Snyder, 2001). They can bring specific expertise together which are required to solve the problems in spite of geographical locality; it is also permitted to the virtual teams in the organizations to take quickly action against unexpected changes in the environment. As a result of that it is considered that virtual teams are most important part of the adaptive competence of the organization to tackle the uncertain events and complex situations (Heckman, n.d.). So, in short we can say it's about building a team, networks of team, virtual team and network of diverse types of expertise which can work on any problem that emerge in this complex and Chaos milieu.

Developing a team of self-leaders by Super leaders:

As, in previous section we came to a conclusion that concept of single leaders is not appropriate at this age. There should be a team work, distributive type of leadership style and good networking among the leaders (Harris & Spillane, 2008) working on same goals, helping and supporting each other with their expertise to achieve the global goal of prosperity, peace and making a world better place to live in. Education is only sector which has direct influence to achieve this goal as education and its system shape the mind set up of the society and a country. As, people working in education, components of internal and external environment of any educational institutions and educational system do not possess simple linear relation but has non-linear and complex relations. In this scenario we have in one hand complex and chaotic situation and in other hand need of team leadership, networking and virtual organization. So researcher proposes the use of 'Self leadership' and 'Super leader' as the way out, the concept well discussed and researched by (Sims and Manz as cited in Harris, n.d.). To become a super-leader one should be a self leader first and by being a 'super leader' one has to work for developing several 'self leaders'. Off course each of them can be super leader again. But again, it is always important that all the super hero and self leaders with similar motives should be on a network to achieve each goal.

Super leadership and self leadership:

Before going toward Super-Leadership, this means leading others to lead themselves. Sims and Manz (1996) coined the phrase "self-leadership" as the moniker for lead themselves. Self-leadership suggests "purposeful leadership toward personal standards of behavior and performance" (Sims & Manz, 1996, p. 87 as cited in Harris, n.d.). This viewpoint suggests that

individuals are responsible for setting their own goals, and that organizational control systems are not necessary and in fact often hinder the process of leadership.

There are basic three assumptions which are underlined self-leadership (Sims & Manz, 1996 as cited in Harris, n.d.). First, every person practices self-leadership up-to some extend but everyone not have effective self-leadership abilities. Second, it is considered that self-leadership can be educated by the persons and it is not restricted to people who have inborn leadership qualities. Third, self-leadership is supposed to relate with every person who works. The idea is considered the backbone of these theories and agreed on that the leadership qualities can be learned by the persons and everyone can be a leader after learning.

Behavior of individual focused on leadership strategies, which are most important in self-leadership progression and this behavior focused leadership strategy are specific actions that we apply to ourselves, so we can perform better. Some of these strategies include self-goal-setting, self- observation, self-evaluation, self-reward, self-punishment, cueing strategies, and practice (Harris, n.d.). These strategies are specially agreed towards successfully helping persons towards completing those obligations that are considered irritating and very complex.

Building natural motivation is the part of self-leadership into work. For building such type of motivation there are some strategies which include (Sims & Manz, 1996 as cited in Harris, n.d.):

- (1) *Redesign work to increase natural rewards*
- (2) *Search for natural rewards that already are part of the work*
- (3) *Build natural rewards into the work*
- (4) *Focus dwelling on what you like as opposed to what you do not like about the work.*

Since self-leadership related very closely to Super Leadership, research and additional theoretical concepts will be enclosed in the section on Super Leadership. Self leadership behavior is supposed to be the most significant for team members at the work environment.

Awareness as important component of effective leadership of 21st century:

In this age of chaos and complexities, right decision is most at right moments. For this, right information at right time is most. So awareness about internal and external environment is obligate. Based on the contemporary perspectives of educational leadership, Kanga and Kandenyi (2005) emphasized on awareness as important component and propose that true leaders are capable to apply: psychological, philosophical, social, cultural, economics, political, ethical, technological, and organizational internal and external environment awareness to manipulate others toward the achievement of goals (Sum, 2010).



(Source: Sum, 2010 at <http://www.vichetsum.com>).

Kanga & Kandeniyi (2005) stressed supporting Ash & Parsall (2000) that the diversity characterizing schools in 21st century call for thinking leadership styles that will inspire all interested parties (educators, educationist, learners, society/parents) for ‘desired outcomes’ to be realized. To inspire all, the leader should have good awareness of everything (as discussed earlier). So by merging this concept of Ash and Parsall with the concept of ‘self-leader’ and ‘super-leader’ of Sims & Manz along with the idea of Greenleaf about servant leadership (Hannay, n.d.; Kanga & Kandeniyi, 2005; Ash & Parsall, 2000), I propose model for leadership development (to develop an educational leader of 21st century). In this proposition, at first a person should have motive to lead by serving others as a ‘Servant leader’, concept forwarded by Greenleaf in 1970s. The notion of which is “To lead is to serve”. Then as second step, s/he has to develop himself/herself as ‘self leader’ who is well aware of internal (own nature) and external environment and situations. The awareness domain includes: philosophical, psychological, social, cultural, political, economics, ethical, technological, and organizational internal- and external-environment awareness (Sum, 2010). Then, as next step, the self-leader will transcend him/herself to the ‘super-leader’ as a leader of a team or several team of ‘self-leaders’ each of them working with their teams. Each self-leader can transcend him/herself to be a super-leader. Now, all super leaders, all self-leaders and their teams should be on a network and should work together in achieving a global goal of creating an educational environment in which the curriculum and pedagogies are to develop 21st century human as a global citizen who are well aware of their duties, responsibilities to develop the world as a peace, prosper and better place to live in through sustainable development.

As a super leader any principal or teacher leader will use their awareness to develop all the *interested parties* (educators, educationist, learners, society/parents etc) as a ‘self-leader’

by raising their awareness through all the means used by ‘Servant leaders’. Servant leaders (if in leadership-position) focus on giving everything their subordinates need to win or achieve the goal, be it resources, time, guidance, or inspiration (Greenleaf, 1987 as cited in Hannay, n.d.). Servant leaders are considered the leaders service for people and keep close their hearts and minds (Hannay, n.d.). Team is considered as a most common vehicle in which self-leadership is uttered. The Super Leader trying to make it occur by initiating, encouraging, and supporting empowered the team.

Lao Tzu best expressed the idea behind Super Leadership and servant leadership: it is best for all leaders to help people eventually; they don’t require him (as cited by Harris, n.d.). Super Leadership is the practice of *leading others to lead themselves*. True leadership come up to from within, the feeling to provide others right from the heart. In the end, accomplishment flows from follower self-leadership (Greenleaf, 1987 as cited in Hannay, n.d.; Harris, n.d.). The idea of super leadership and servant leadership both emphasize on followers, and particularly the notion of emergent followers who are active self-leaders.

The Awareness & Reflective practices:

There is no doubt that we are at the age of chaos and complexities with lots of issues to be addressed in education sector. In this competitive world, unhealthy competition and media violence, school safety and violence prevention, the growing demand of extra effort for students leading to elevated stress level of the students, the individual interest and need of different students to be addressed, carrying out flexible curriculum, are some of the issues to be addressed by educational leaders of this age in one hand while there is an never-ending debate on education as a public good or commodities in the next. There are several confrontation, dilemmas and cognitive dissonance faced by educational leaders about morality and ethical issues (Furman, 2003). Economical practice for getting maximum profit in this fast growing world has changed the concept of morality and ethics and made it changeable things with time and situation. This is as leading at the edge of chaos and complexities. Making decision at complex situations where there is no linear relationship among the factors and components involved (Shields & Sayani, 2005). The need to deal with conflict and tension as well as all of the other competing demands seems overwhelming. There is no linear cause and effect relationship. So, lots of decisions are to be made instantly and at very new complex situations (Shields & Sayani, 2005; Marion & McGee, 2006; Crow, 2006). The rational decision is sometimes difficult and sometimes there is no time for collecting information for rational decisions. The leader has to believe in his/her intuition alone. In this age of chaos and complexities, it is very vital to take right decision at right times because the decision can affect the whole system which is very complex. Just a single wrong decision can lead to more chaos and disorder and can have long-lasting effect.

Awareness of all above aspects leads to better intuition to take right decision at crucial movements. Reflective practices including critical thinking and critical reflections are one of the ways of developing intuition and be aware of internal and external environment. Kanga and Kandenyi (2005) also from their study concluded that ‘Intuitive leadership’ is the leadership

that we need at this stage (of chaos and complexities) and can be developed through reflective practice.

Reflective practice and critical thinking:

Reflection or “*critical reflection*” denotes to an action or procedure in which an experience is recollected, and evaluated (Richards, 2010). According to Moon, (as cited in Hinnet, 2002, pp 5) reflective practice as a set of capabilities and dexterity to specify the attractive position. The theory of reflective practice is adept by “*Donald Schon*” primarily; his effort is dependent on the revision in ample variety of professionals. Most the event in professional life is unpredictable events, which may set off two kinds of reflections as described by Schon (1983). The first reflection comes instantaneously. It is the capability to discover and enlarge repeatedly by productively applying recent & past experiences and reasoning to unfamiliar events when ever it occurs. On actions the second reflection arises separately. It is supposed a procedure of thinking backward on what occurred in a past situation and what may have donated to the surprising event, whether the appropriate actions were taken or not (Schon, 1983 as cited in Kaufman, 2003).

Bolton (2001), who advocates about reflective practices through narrative writing states: ‘Reflective practice through writing is a way of expressing and expressing and exploring our own and others stories: crafting and shaping them to help us understand and develop’. The importance of reflecting on what you are doing, as part of the learning process, has been emphasized by many investigators. There is much agreement in the literature that reflective practices are critically important in the development of professionals including leadership development (Bolton, 2001; Gnawali, 2008; Levine, Kern, & Wright, 2008; Rucinski & Bauch, 2006).

As discussed in Wlodarsky and Walters (2007), reflective thinking and teaching have also been defined as meta-cognition or self-monitoring based on cognitive-meditational theories of learning. The internal thought processes and external experiences collectively become or contribute to “meta-cognition.” Meta-cognition is “thinking about one’s own thinking,” (Wlodarsky and Walters, 2007) and it can be related to reflection or reflective practice as it involves thinking explicitly on thought, experience, or action and has profound implications in different professional developments. (Levine, Kern, & Wright, 2008)

Conclusion

Everybody should at least agree on the fact that no one style of leadership is panacea to all situation and time. In this competitive world, unhealthy competition and media violence, school safety and violence prevention, the growing demand of extra effort for students leading to elevated stress level of the students, the individual interest and need of different students to be addressed, carrying out flexible curriculum, are some of the issues to be addressed by educational leaders of this age in one hand while there is an never-ending debate on education as a public good or commodities in the next. There are several confrontation, dilemmas and cognitive dissonance faced by educational leaders about morality and ethical issues. Globalization and cultural blend with the fast growing technological development adds more complexities and chaos in the scenario.

Making decision at complex situations where there is no linear relationship among the factors and components involved is intricate in one hand and lots of decisions are to be made instantly and at very new complex situations in the next. Rational decision may not work or may not be applicable. The leader has to believe in his/her intuition alone. So, here in this article I proposed awareness as the main component to lead.

So, to lead in the diversity of 21st century with all complexities leadership styles that will inspire all interested parties (educators, educationist, learners, society/parents) for ‘desired outcomes’ to be realized. Here in this study authors proposed a model for leadership development (to develop an educational leader of 21st century). In this proposition, at first a person should have motive to lead by serving others as a ‘Servant leader’, concept forwarded by Greenleaf in 1970s. The notion of which is “*To lead is to serve.*” Then as second step, he/she has to develop himself/herself as ‘self leader’ who is well aware of internal (own nature) and external environment and situations. The awareness domain includes: philosophical, psychological, social, cultural, political, economics, ethical, technological, and organizational internal- and external-environment awareness. Then, as next step, the self –leader will transcend him/herself to the ‘super-leader’ as a leader of a team or several team of ‘self-leaders’ each of them working with their teams. Each self-leader can transcend him/herself to be a super-leader. Now, all super leaders, all self-leaders and their teams should be on a network and should work together in achieving a global goal of creating an educational environment in which the curriculum and pedagogies are to develop 21st century human as a global citizen who are well aware of their duties, responsibilities to develop the world as a peace, prosper and better place to live in through sustainable development.

As, researchers pointed out awareness of internal and external nature is vital aspects that leads to better intuition to take right decision at right time at crucial movements, reflective practices including critical thinking and critical reflections are some of the ways of developing intuition and awareness.

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