Role of Academic Leadership in Raising Quality of Education at Tertiary Level in Pakistan

Kishwar Naheed

Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development, Faisalabad, Pakistan.
M. Naeem Mohsin
GC University Faisalabad, Pakistan.

ABSTRACT

Higher Education is important for accelerating economic development of the country. Universities in collaboration with the society are responsible to ensure quality education, result oriented research and service to the community. The main objectives of current study was evaluation of quality education coupled with development of academic leadership and their role. Sample of about 800 individuals has vbeen selected from different universities having varied roles, designations, professional experience, education and administrative experience. Random sampling techniques were used to select the sample.

The key findings of study revealed that quality of education at tertiary level needed more efforts to bring it at par with international standard and market demand and academic leadership can play an important role in this respect. The key findings of the study revealed that the quality of education at tertiary level needed more efforts to bring it up to international standard and there is an acute necessity to improve academic leadership capacity and capability. The major conclusion of the study was that academic leadership plays a major role in improving quality education at tertiary level. HOD/Senior Academicians were more satisfied in respect of quality education as compared to civil society.

Key words: **Academic Leadership, Quality Education, Tertiary, International Standard**

Introduction

The study of leadership in general and academic leadership in particular is not a new phenomenon. There has been no consistent definition of leadership found so far (Mello 1999). Very little research has been done on academic leadership. Formal training for academic leadership is often non-existent. Leaders are expected to be agents of change and mentors guiding faculty and staff through team building and professional development. They occupy a unique role in higher educational institutions. Definition of quality education has not yet been unanimously agreed because it depends from nation to nation, country to country and region to region depending upon their culture, resources, national goals and market demand. Quality is to be measured against national goals, culture and market demand. It is the academic leadership who plays a pivotal role to achieve

or enhance quality of education at tertiary level. Educational purpose is the pre-requisite to any consideration of quality.

The best way to improve quality in education is to mobilize public concern and political support which can be best achieved by academic leadership at tertiary level. The main objectives of the study were to discuss role of academic leadership in raising quality of education in higher education, access the dimension of educational leadership in changed context and establish relationship between Academic Leadership and quality. This research will provide information base for Academic Leadership role in improvement of quality education in higher education. The result of the study may facilitate the policy makers and planners in devising suitable strategies for future plans of action for getting better quality of education at tertiary level. The research may be beneficial to develop capacity of Academic Leadership at tertiary level.

Review of related literature

Academic leadership at tertiary level is facing tremendous analytical scrutiny as universities have undergone major changes as far as number of students, faculty, mode of funding and market requirements are concerned. There are various leadership models as under: -

Individual Model	Based on personal status and professional recognition
Transformative Model	Overrides other models based on Human interaction.
Collaborative Model	This approach is mostly emphasized But it is slow.
Collegial Model	Mutually supportive among staff Academia work together yet Maintaining their personal entity.
Hierarchical Model	In this model, the Authority and Power is linked with hierarchy. It Carries top down autocratic picture Of leadership thus least acceptable.

There are various aspects which may create professional leaders.

A leader should have clarity of mission of the institution. Ability to articulate an educational vision is key to fostering continuous improvement. (David 2006). Vision development empowers individuals to feel committed, imaginative and innovative.

Amey (2006) explains that successful leaders at tertiary level education "lead via team in system that are weblike and hierarchical (p.56) building the relationship "Draws members together to build a culture" they feel secure (Mitchell p.186. David (2006). Ability to articulate an educational vision (Mitchell p.186) draws members together to build a culture they feel secure. The academic Leaders must have critical reflection and deep understanding of organizational culture and values.

Students play a major role because they are one of the end users of quality teaching and quality research. Student bodies if empowered can prove to be powerful drivers for ensuring success of quality teaching and research. Student bodies free of political biases can enhance quality teaching if they are motivated and sensitized about their potential impact of their opinion. Remember these very students are going to be future academic leaders.

Success of any initiative for quality education undertaken by universities depends mainly on the environment of departments thus the importance of HOD's and Deans as academic leaders. Normally top down approach is adopted, it must be replaced by bottoms up approach through a decentralized system. HOD's and Deans manage quality teaching by creating organized team work ensuring productive functioning to meet the expectations of the system. HOD's and Deans can produce results once they are facilitated by provision of support staff by the administration of institution because support staff helps in implementation of the reforms as per timeline.

A capable leader must have the ability to diagnose solution in a complex situation. He should have the capacity to look into the future with the wider vision and should be able to react quickly to rapidly changing circumstances. A good leader must process the capacity to listen to criticism. Capability means holistic vision and creativity. As per (KRC consultant (2007) following characteristics/ qualities are required for a good and capable leader. Establishing focus, influencing others, drive to achieve, attention to information, Interpersonal information, improving performance, focusing on customers, building relationship, fostering team work, developing and empowering others.

"Leadership is not about making clever decisions and doing deals, best of all for personal gains. It is about encouraging people to make good decisions and do other things. In other words, it is about helping release positive energy that exists naturally within people. Effective leadership inspire more than empowers. It connects more than controls. It demonstrates more than it decides. "It does all this by emerging itself about all and consequently others". (Mintsherg, 2004: p.143).

Methodology

Participants

Eight hundred and two (802) individuals from different universities having varied roles, designations, professional experience, education and administrative experience. Random sampling techniques were used to select the participants. The detail of sample is given below:

Table 1
Distribution of participants

Type	N
HOD/Senior Academia/Administration	37
Faculty	109
Parents	250
Students	331
Civil Society	27
Media	38
Principals of Affiliated Colleges	10
Total	**802**

Table 2
Classification of participants with respect to universities

Name	N	Percentage
University of Education	80	10.0
GCWUF	143	17.8
Riphah Int. University	111	13.8
University of Faisalabad	107	13.3
GCUF	154	19.2
NTU	96	12.0
UET Lahore	111	13.8
Total	**802**	**100.0**

Instrumentation

The study was carried out using mixed method research design by combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. In order to collect quantitative data, survey method was used. Five questionnaires were prepared for various categories of population. The questions were framed based on the objects of the study related literature and due discussion with supervisors and other experts. For qualitative data some open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire. An interview protocol was as well developed for collection of qualitative data.

Development of five questionnaires

There were five different types of respondents. Following questionnaires were developed and used for data collection.
Questionnaire for administrators/Deans/HODs/senior academicians
Questionnaire for parents
Questionnaire for Students
Questionnaire for representatives for civil societies and Media
Questionnaire for faculty

Based on the objectives of the study, each questionnaire was divided into ten different factors. The main purpose of each questionnaire was to collect the opinions and views of respondents regarding role of different stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, civil society and media high officials ect). There were three parts of each questionnaire. First part consisted of demographical information about the respondents. Second part consisted of different questions grouped into ten related factors such as administration of the university, relevant curricula, teacher's quality, and students support services, learning environment, quality assurance, and staff development, good governance in universities, academic leadership, and role of stakeholders. There were 80 questions in each questionnaire. The respondents have to respond on five rating scale i.e; Not satisfactory (1), satisfactory (2), good (3), very good (4), and excellent (5). Third part consisted of three descriptive questions regarding major challenges, opinions and reason to prefer the respective university. In order to collect qualitative data.

In depth interviews

The in-depth interview protocol was designed for VCs and Deans of the universities included in the population and selected principals of the affiliated colleges. The interview protocol was designed in line with the techniques and procedures elaborated in literature (Silverman 1993; Miles and huberman 1994; Bernard 1995; Denzit and Lincoln 2000). Data regarding academic and professional qualification and administrative experience were collected from the institution of respective interviewees. A list of 10 questions was designed for VCs and Deans of respective universities. A list of 05 questions was designed for principals. There were some supplementary questions which came out of discussion. The interviewer was assisted by another person during the interview for purpose of recording and taking notes.

Validation of instrumentation

Validity and authenticity are the core issues of any research. The data not catering for objectives of the study is of no value. Designing and construction of

instruments is a lengthy and hefty job for a researcher therefore maximum elaborated effort has been put in for designing instruments. So that the data, collected through these instruments give better results. While collecting the data statistical ambiguities have also to be removed. Validity of the instrument was examined through guidance from the relevant expert. The questionnaire and interview protocol documents were examined by five experts who were well experienced in the field of higher education.

The reviewers were apprised with the purpose and objects of study they checked each item for relationship with the objects. The instrument was improved in the light of suggestions by experts. Items were categorized in different factors in compliance with the remarks by reviewers. Some irrelevant statements were deleted on the advice of experts. Few grammatical and conceptual amendments were also suggested by experts.

Pilot testing

Instruments were tested in a pilot study. Questions were framed in easy understandable language. Five questionnaires were examined by five different experts each. Questionnaires were delivered through research assistant and were later collected back. The data were coded and analyzed statistically. Pilot testing was done to confirm 'reliability of collected material for research.

Data collection

The data were collected on above mentioned instruments through researcher personally through visits and two research assistants were also involved for the help of researcher in the field. Follow up visits were also arranged to collect the data.

Interview recording

All interviews from VCs, Deans and Principals of affiliated colleges were recorded personally by the researcher assisted by an associate. The researcher visited office of each respondent. Prior to the visit, telephonic contact was made at appropriate level to arrange for meeting for interview. Interviews were tailored for duration of 40 to 45 minutes. Arrangements were made to record the interviews and notes were also taken by research associate to facilitate preparation of research report and analysis. It took about three weeks to complete the interviews.

Data analysis

Available data were statistically analyzed using the computer software SPSS. Analysis of qualitative data related to open ended questions and interview protocol was carried out through step by step process. Raw data were converted into

frequencies and placed in identical categories of responses. Data collected through above mentioned instruments 'were tabulated analyzed and interpreted by means of suitable descriptive and inferential statistics.

Findings and conclusions

The participants were selected from 07 universities of Punjab. The analysis of data collected through questionnaire is presented below.

Table 4
Quality culture and gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-Value	P-Value
Male	404	31.1407	6.51217	800	-2.51	.012
Female	398	32.3385	6.88303			

It indicated that there is a considerable difference between male and female from P-value (.012) it is evident that results are important. As per result female respondents are more satisfied as far as recruitment procedure of teaching staff, standard of knowledge, experience of teaching faculty, examination system, quality of academic facilities, learning resources and in-service training of teaching staff, the male respondents are less satisfied.

Table 5
Academic Leadership and gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	P-value
Male	404	17.0642	3.89857	800	-3.671	.000
Female	398	18.0872	3.95769			

The above table indicated that there is a striking difference between the gender perceptions. It is evident from P-value that the results are significant. Female respondents were more satisfied with the performance of academic leaders as compared to male respondents.

Table 6

Satisfaction of participants regarding quality culture

Type	N	Mean	SD
HOD/Senior Academia/Administration	37	40.9189	5.04633
Parents	250	39.0070	8.26373
Students	331	38.6347	8.65605
Civil society	27	32.2867	8.40375
Media	38	38.3947	9.14903
Principals of Affiliated College	10	38.6000	6.97933
Total	**802**	**38.8709**	**8.22399**

The above table shows that the respondents such as HODs/Senior Academia are more satisfied with quality culture where as civil society is less satisfied.

Table 7

Participant response to Academic Leadership

Type	N	Mean	SD
HODs/Senior Academia/ Administration	37	18.8108	2.97058
Faculty	109	18.0826	3.66194
Parents	250	17.3223	4.07182
Students	331	17.5731	3.90813
Civil society	27	15.2593	5.00456
Media	38	18.2368	3.85854
Principals of Affiliated Colleges		16.9000	3.66515
Total	**802**	**17.5664**	**3.95417**

The above table shows that respondents among HODs, Senior Academia and administration are more satisfied with academic leadership as compared to civil society respondents.

Focused discussion with senior academia leaders

Than main findings from discussion with academia leaders is as under:
Majority of principals of affiliated colleges were less satisfied with service being provided by concerned universities.

Majority of respondents were less satisfied with examination system as there were various parallel systems. Majority of respondents remarked that the standard of education in universities is not up to mark and much more has to be done to come up to international standard. Most of the respondents were of the opinion that the present policy of Government regarding tertiary education particularly that of quality education is not comprehensive, wholesome and also lacks continuity of policy. There is a substantial variance in the list of challenges as seen by respondents. Majority of the respondents were of the view that curriculum followed in most of the institutions did not meet the international standard and was not as well as per market demand thereby adversely effecting quality education. Lack of appropriate priorities of the govt. for education also is a contributing factor for poor quality education.

Almost all the respondents were of the opinion that political interference in the departments is detrimental to quality education. In appropriate selection of members for governing bodies were also considered as major problem in quality education.Base of individual's education is weak which make it difficult to grasp concept at higher level.

Policy of university ranking contributes towards low quality in tertiary education as it lays stress on number of students, programme and not the quality. Universities are gradually becoming money earning concerns rather than drivers of quality education. Mechanism of monitoring and evaluation of mushroom growth of private universities is not up to mark.

Lack of good scientific infrastructure with regard to technical and intellectual resources coupled with paucity of funds is a major weakness towards quality research. Use of libraries has to be made more attractive and useful by provision of better service and better study atmosphere. Quality of teachers at the time of entry and subsequent in-service training is another contributing factor towards low quality education.

Non-standardization of education system in the country is considered as major hazard in quality education achievements. Inappropriate selection of members of regulatory bodies of universities cause deterioration in standard of quality of education. Our overall culture of services does not attract the cream of the nation towards teaching profession. Civil society and alumni have the least interest in creating a quality education culture in the country.

It is concluded that majority of the academic leaders are clear about their role in implementing the improvement strategy. Senior academic leaders were not satisfied with the role of stakeholders for enhancement of quality education. It was strongly felt that there is no long-term national policy on education and if at all it was there, that was also being given lip service. The role of academic leaders in this respect was hampered by political interference and funds constraints. Training of academic leaders is not up-to the mark. Measures to enhance leader's capacity

and capabilities are insufficient. Absence of proper curriculum was considered as one of the major obstacles for quality education.

Discusions and recommendations

Quality and quantity in education sector is ever rising demand of any society. Both are important yet quality in education needs higher attention at tertiary level. It is necessary to have a proper definition of "quality". Quality should be reflected in numbers which will help better in decision making. Quality of the academic leaders is the basic key for quality education. At the same time quality students is the pre-requisite to quality education. As far as academic leadership and quality culture in universities are concerned, female respondents were more satisfied than male respondents. Senior academic leadership showed more satisfaction as compared to civil society regarding quality culture. Overall it was agreed that a lot has been done as regards to quality and quantity of education at tertiary level since creation of Pakistan, but much is desired to be done to come up to international standards and to achieve better ranking of our universities worldwide.

Quality research in our tertiary education institutions is much below standards, therefore, a concentrated effort is required in this specific field. The purpose of education is to develop desirable qualities in a person. Framework for assessing quality depends on agreed goals, learning outcomes, Curriculum and leaders and teacher's development. The best way to improve quality in education is to mobilize public concern and political support to make improvement of quality education as a part of policy dialogue. For better quality in education better resources are of utmost importance and along with this judicial utilization of resources avoiding wastage is of paramount importance.

Keeping this in view, the research finding following recommendations are proposed for review and re-hatching of policy by policy makers and all other concerned agencies, groups and individuals.

There should be education think tanks at national and provincial levels in the form of continuous body like senate, which should formulate national education policy and should keep it under constant review.

Based on a permanent, progressive national education policy, university should formulate result-oriented policies and procedure for quality education. Job description, assignment along with their priorities and timeline for senior administration, faculty and other staff should be determined and their evaluation/performance be assured, and 360-degree evaluation of teaching staff, administrators and senior academic leaders is recommended.

Based on national education policy, curriculum committee must tailor curriculum for all education stages keeping in view the need and demand of national and international society. Quaid e Azam's vision of creation of Pakistan should be our guide for quality education. Senior academic leaders must create

supportive, productive work environment culture in the institution along with provision of feedback and performance of evaluation system for faculty and staff.

Senior education leaders should create shared vision setting goals and develop unit plans in consultation with stakeholders. The executive head must serve as an advocate for the departments interest while disseminating/sharing department information and dealing with media.

The executive head should encourage while fostering scholarly activities, by managing space and facilities. Proper methodology should be worked out for regular liaison/inter action with all types of stakeholders.

Exam system needs to be streamlined. There should be one type of exam for all to do away with the dichotomy in the exam system in the country. Proper annual calendar must be made well in advance for holding exams and announcement of results by educational institutions. A good infrastructure having technical and intellectual resources for quality research work should be placed on ground in all universities so as to facilitate all researchers for quality research work.

Funding for quality education and quality research should be given top priority and its proper utilization of the same must be ensured through very strict accountability measures.

Executive head of institution must lay down mechanism for inter action with society and other stakeholders so as to encourage them to participate in international activities. Opening of universities in private sector should be encouraged after having placed a ruthless regulatory mechanism and their subsequent operation should be channelized through an effective monitoring and mentoring systems. More universities in public sector need to be established as per requirement of the area.

Preference should be given to establish specialized universities as compared to general universities. Proper induction system for faculty should be laid down which should be free from political interference. Promotion of faculty members should be based on their research work and their update knowledge in his/her subject besides other requirements.

Teaching cadre must be given top priority as far as their status, pay, perks and privilege are concerned to attract the cream of the nation towards this profession. Proper academies be established by the Govt. to train the members of faculty after their induction, before taking up their duties in the field of human resource, accounts and administration etc. Political interference in the administration of institutions should not be allowed at any cost. All heads of universities must establish goals with a view to educate the youth to become productive members of society seeking to meet industry/market demand and lastly to achieve global education standards.

Teaching educational institution must be established in Govt. sector so that they fulfill vital role in global education community by utilizing potential to bring

challenges within educational system which should shape the knowledge and skills of future generation.

Executive heads of public and private universities must ensure that they are not competing with each other rather complementing each other. Libraries in the universities should remain open for 24 hours round the clock providing congenial atmosphere for studies, rest and recreation. Some good practices as under are recommended to boost good governance and regimentation in the universities which will ultimately help improving academic leadership and quality education. It is suggested that the university should build up an effective network with other good ranking universities of other countries to exchange good practices, experience and mutual recognition,

Social security policy may be implemented in the university. It will enhance the interest of the employees with organization. It will attract a better lot thus promote brain gain and employees will stick to the employment in the university thus reducing brain drain, All the staff from top to bottom irrespective of their category or status should benefit from this. Detailed policy in this regard should be prepared by taking all stakeholders in confidence.

Group insurance scheme may be introduced for staff and students as well. A clear-cut policy may be prepared after due deliberation in consultation with insurance experts. A policy for benefits to the staff dependents be introduced. In which medical insurance at special rates for family (Spouse, Kid, and Parents) can be included. Kids of the staff enrolled in the university and with good achievements may be given reasonable concession in fee of the university. These concessions even may continue for staff members even after retirement.

End of service gratitude policy for good work done by the staff members during service may be evolved to make people more devoted. It will be recognition of productive contribution of the individual towards the university. Gratitude may be calculated as per length of service in phases. Sabbatical leave policy may be introduced in university for the members of the faculty as the recognition to their outstanding services. It will provide opportunities for scholarly development.

A Comprehensive University Management System is required to be articulated for quality analysis and decision making. This system if properly made and maintained, helps in establishing credibility of the institution and enhancing its soft image as an institution.

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Biographical Note

Kishwar Naheed Rana is Principal, Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development, Samanabad, Faisalabad, Pakistan.

Dr. M. Naeem Mohsin is Associate Professor, Department of Education, Government College University, Faislabad, Pakistan.

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