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Principal as an Educational Leader in 21st Century

INTRODUCTION

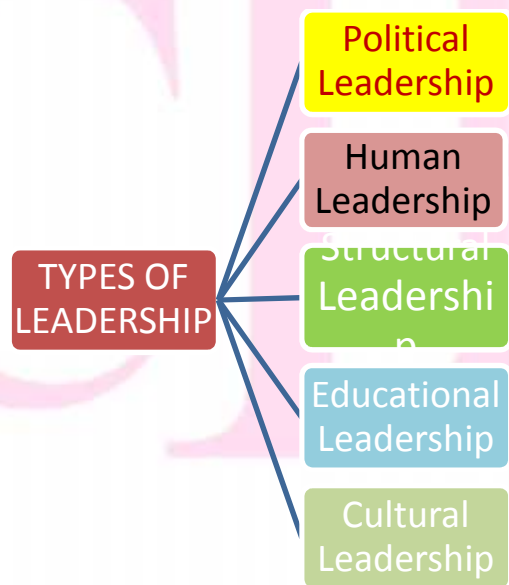
In one of his speech **Vince Lombardi (n.d)** quote “Leaders are made, they are not born. They are made by hard effort, which is the price which all of us must pay to achieve any goal that is worthwhile.” The above short but quite famous single line has left each intellectual to think debate and analyze from all the angles. Many theories whether of science, management or philosophy have been applied to test the essence of this sentence. However it is a “born” or “made “quality, leader’s importance in any organization cannot be neglected. A leader who lead others and set certain concepts in their respective fields later turn as benchmark or rather takes the shapes of concrete philosophy. At time it is visible and sometimes it is abstract, too. Today in the 21st century, when the world is moving towards a unified whole, and fragmentation, violence and ego are the threats to this need for harmony, the true leader that society is looking for is one that has a universal vision to facilitate synergetic growth, and values the process as well as the goal. Leadership plays a vital role in the survival of organizations. It is concerned with the framing of policies and implementation which help to direct the activities of an organization towards achieving desired goals. Leadership is certainly possible in an authoritarian position, but at the same time, there are many external as well internal factors affecting any leader’s style of work. Some of them are personal enthusiasm, personal authority, creditability, knowledge and skill. Leadership cannot be imported from outside; rather it gradually emerges, grows and is achieved. Leadership is the ability to guide, conduct, direct or influence the team mates for the purpose of achieving common goal. The leader thus, possesses the ability to influence others to achieve positive results. Bennis (1966) defined leadership as the fulcrum on which the demands of the individual and the demands of the organization are balanced. Patel (1983) referred leadership as a process by which an agent

induces a subordinate to behave in a desired manner. Davis and Newstrom (1989) positively commented that leadership is a process of encouraging and helping others to work enthusiastically towards objectives. Kouzes & Posner (2002) showed another dimension by saying that leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow. The core message that runs through all these definitions and which constitute the essence of leadership is that leadership is not ability but a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to focus their efforts towards a common goal.

Effective leadership always plays a momentous role in the augmenting the efficiency of an educational institute. Management is increasingly considered a body of knowledge and practice, a process comprising of planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling. Large school systems have come into being which present complexities, requiring considerable energies or administration. A 'school head' thus is seen to need management skills how to make school plans, organize required resources to implement these, assess implementation and provide feedback for planning the next period. This skill set is seen as a full time specialization distinct from 'academic' tasks like teaching learning, preparing to teach, teacher support etc. Many schools suffer poor management, which affects institutional effectiveness-absence of rigorous long term and short term (annual) planning impacts focus and alignment of work of teachers, poor organizing impacts implementation, poor monitoring and feedback mechanisms affect the school's learning from its work experiences which in turn affects planning. Thus every school needs a good manager.

TYPES OF LEADERSHIP:

Cheng (1994) has described various types of leadership which are as under.



HISTORY OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:

Toward the end of the first century of public education, educational leadership completed the managerial turn, whereby business values eclipsed the values of democracy in education. Each segment of society started taking leadership as an important tool to change the current scenario, specially educational leadership attracted everyone's attention. Governments, too, shifted their roles vis-à-vis public education from that of protecting the constitutional rights of all citizens to becoming the central authorities, dictating structural, curricular, and accountability policies for public schools.

The term *Educational leadership* came into currency in the late 20th century for several reasons. Demands were made on schools for higher levels of pupil achievement, and schools were expected to improve and reform. The concept of leadership was favored because it conveys dynamism and pro-activity. The principal is commonly thought to be the school leader. If history serves us correctly, the principal-ship is about 170 years old with four major role changes from the early 19th century through the first half of the 20th century and into the early years of the 21st century. Initially, the principals' main function was clerical in nature and focused on assisting the board of education with day-to-day details of running the school. At the turn of the 20th century, states began to develop common curriculum for public schools with principals fulfilling the role of teacher-scholar or master educator who had added an emphasis on curricular and instructional matters to school operations. In the early 20th century, the Industrial Revolution affected the principals' role by shifting the emphasis to expert manager with efficiency in handling non-instructional tasks such as budget, facility, and transportation. The early 1980s initiated the change that has continued through today with the principals' viewed as chief executive officer, including the roles of professional adviser to the board, leader of reforms, manager of resources and communicator to the public.

CONCEPT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:

Educational leadership is that leadership which provides direction and expert advice on developments of learning, teaching and curriculum, emphasizes relevance to education in management, diagnosis educational problems and encourages professional development and teaching improvement. Educational leader has to imbibe the qualities of all the types of leaders. Educational leaders hold leadership positions with significant responsibility. As the responsibilities of the leader have increased in recent years, so has the stress. Coordinating and interacting with faculty, parents, students, community members, business leaders, state and local policy makers is stimulating as well as demanding. Today the Principal of a Secondary

school is expected to play a large number of roles such as: Instructional Leader, Philosopher, Disciplinarian, Public Relation Officer in the local community, Decision maker, Curriculum Designer, Data Processor, Facilitator for Learning, etc. Essentially the Principal has to provide leadership to the institution and the staff in such matters for infusing these in curriculum planning and transaction process.

ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF A SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN CONTEXT:

Principals should be able to use collaborative efforts towards the achievement of the goal that are underpinned by co-operation and consultation. The Principal as the school head should be able to act as a mentor to support the professional development needs of the whole team. Being an effective Human resource manager he should value the individual contributions of teachers and other school associates and guide them in their prescribed roles. The basic values and attributes of the Principal are his needs to be confident and capable of asserting the professional role of teachers and the value of education. Being a promoter of continuous lifelong learning, he is also expected to be a strong learning focused resource person. He should be totally committed to the ongoing learning needs of their students and staffs. The Principal must possess high ordering skills in establishing and maintaining effective and high quality relationships with wide range of people. He should hold a deep commitment to the values of cultural and indigenous groups within their community and bring wisdom and understanding to the resolution of differences. The Principal is expected to be intellectually and critically aware of global issues and possess a futuristic orientation in their planning and management processes. He should be skilled and knowledgeable in relation to the application of information and learning technologies to meet the curriculum requirements. Apart from the professional skills, he must possess strong personal qualities like inspiration, reliability, honesty, trust, risk-taking, innovation and a sense of humor.

DUTIES, POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRINCIPAL:

Principals have to guide and control the work of the teaching and non-teaching staff of the school. The Principal would plan the year's academic work in advance in consultation with his colleagues and hold staff meeting at least once a month, review the work done during the month and assess the progress of the pupils. Principal would help and guide the teachers to promote their professional growth and actively encourage their participation in courses designed for in-service education. Principal would promote the initiative of the teachers for self-improvement and encourage them to undertake experiments which are educationally sound.

Principal will be the in-charge of admission in the school, preparation of school timetable, allocation of duties and teaching load to the teachers, and shall provide necessary facilities to the teachers to discharge their duties and conduct school examination in accordance with the instructions issued by the Board from time to time. Principal will be responsible for the proper maintenance of accounts of the school, school records, service books of teachers, and such other registers, returns and statistics as may be specified by the Board, responsible for the provision of supervision of students and student activities on school play grounds, sports events and related practical examinations and competitions.

CONCLUSION: Thus, the Principal has many roles to play like a human resource manager, a liaison, a public relation officer, an instructional leader, a manager, an administrator, an exemplary leader, a counselor, a public officer, a disciplinarian, a building contractor, a nurse, motivator, visionary, community leader, care taker, an academician, technocrat and even a messenger. It means a principal's job is an all rounder's job. A principal has to justify each role equally. He /She is always in centre and each stake holder of the school expects him/her to perform the above mentioned role perfectly with hundred percent dedication.

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