A DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP MODEL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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Abstract. Academic leadership is one of the major factors that can address the challenges of 21st century and subsequently enhance the quality of higher education. The aim of this study is to develop a model of academic leadership for higher education in India for which it has employed a sequential mixed methods strategy. Qualitative data gathered from the research literature is analyzed by recursive interim content analysis to explore academic leadership. The findings of content analysis are used to develop research instruments. The survey questionnaires collect quantitative data to identify expected and current academic leadership practices in India. Qualitative data is collected through semi-structured interviews. A mix of quantitative and qualitative data is arranged sequentially with the help of Priority Need Index (PNI) technique to determine the criticality and urgency of each component. A model has been developed as an output of the study. It has 14 academic leadership constructs presented under three major facets. The constructs are the key enablers to effective academic leadership. (1) organizational leadership: institutionalizing environmental sustainability, ensuring accountability, setting direction, building networks and relationships, managing diversity and promoting collaboration; (2) leading academics: faculty development, teaching and learning, academic freedom; (3) personal attributes: emotional competencies, knowledge, academic credibility and cognitive capabilities. The model is expected to be a stronghold for the existing and guideline for aspiring academic leaders to handle complex and challenging 21st century higher education institutes.

Keywords: Academic leadership, Higher education, Indian higher education

Introduction

For most of its history academia has considered itself somewhat transcendent of the cultural, political and economic forces that influence and shape the rest of society and its institutions. The higher education institutions today are open spaces and perceived to be “more egalitarian than meritocratic” (Bryan & Hughley, 2006, p.161). To put it simply, they are viewed as a right rather than a privilege. The inevitable forces of globalization, demographic shifts in student population, increased competition, rapidly diminishing resources and continually changing technology are some of the “received changes” that directly impact them in several ways. (Buller, 2014, p.29). Higher education is becoming an international service, and thus, there are growing concerns over quality, about its laxity to create a relevant workforce and about 21st century skills and the values needed (Prasad & Stella, 2004). The public as well as private higher education operate within the same precincts and face the similar challenges of 21st century. Higher education has a long and established tradition of emphasizing academic leadership. The perspectives on academic leaders that limits them as mere coordinators or coalition builders have undergone transformations internationally, and have a wide impact on education (Askling & Bjorn, 2002). Today, academic leaders influence the academic institutions, direct and promote scientific and technological progress as well as socio-economic growth and cultural identity (Rowley & Sherman, 2003; Yeilder & Codling, 2004).

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