Spiritual Leadership in Education Industry: A Critical Study on the Effectiveness of in-house Leadership Programmes

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INTRODUCTION

Institutions and business houses have seen varying trends from a fairytale story to tragedies. Leadership and succession planning are key factors that contribute to the growth of any industry. Most of the leadership skills are nurtured and nourished rather than inbuilt, though we can all agree upon that some traces of them are found inborn. Human beings are born with an inimitable set of skills and abilities. Some are born with talents that can make a profession and some with unique skills that are fundamental to any profession, such as empathy, persuasion, vision, communication, and counseling. Some of the talents are crucial in the journey to be a successful leader, and some may have to be developed. Core competencies identified by each leadership theory is significantly distinct from each other. (Henry & Horton, n.d.) The second line of leaders or succession planning ensures that the vision of the institution is consistent and carried forward to the future also. The education sector is not a stranger to this thinking, and under more pressure, as they have many in-house leadership grooming programmes(Doh, 2003). Unfortunately, the success of this programmes depends not only on the skills imparted or developed but also on how much the leader-designates actually implement outside.

The most important HR activity is to conduct leadership training programmes and also ensure that the implementation of the same happens post-training. Ideal leadership traits that have to be endowed in a leader will have to be identified. This ensures the effectiveness of the in-house training programmes. The study here aims at identifying necessary traits of leadership, their use in the in-house training programmes and finally their impact on the succession planning of the institutions. The traits in this study have been identified from 2 parts of the Indian epic Mahabharata i.e., Vidura Neeti and Shanti Parva. The Essential

leadership traits are Vision, decision making, the stability of mind, persistent, ethical and spirituality. This paper attempts to identify the need for these 6 traits in every leader and is a part of the continuing research where these skills are developed further ensuring a well-prepared succession planning. This paper attempts to evaluate the necessity of such training and post-training performance evaluation of leaders identified in universities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a need for conducting an effective leadership development program where an in-depth study of various leadership theories has been done(Holt, 2011). Also, it has been identified that the current leadership skills among leaders were highly inadequate. Though the study focuses more on sales leadership skills, an attempt definitely has been made by it to initiate quality training for leadership and thereby focus on succession planning.

The content of leadership development programmes has to be meticulously planned so that there is a holistic development that would be nurtured in the leader-designate (Boerger, 1979).

There is also a need to map the skills with the leadership themes so that it's perfectly customized. (McElroy & Stark, 1992).

There has been a prior study conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership development programme (Isaakyan & Mulhern, 2014). A prior study using the contingency model has already been done (Fiedler, 2015). Hence there is a need for evaluating the leadership programmes conducted by universities to understand their customization and effectiveness (Monarth, 2015). There is a distinct feeling that leadership training cannot be something which is too mechanical i.e., it cannot be emulated by others. It is more of experiential learning and applying it to understand it's practicability (Petrie, n.d. 2014).

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the need for leadership development programme in universities.
2. To assess and identify skills needed to be developed in the leadership programmes.
3. To evaluate the post-training performance of participants.
4. To utilize effective & successful participants for succession planning.

METHODOLOGY

To assess the various skills needed for leaders of future in education industry by discussions with top management. To understand how effective was the training of the programme from each of the programme participants through in-depth interviews. To evaluate each of these participants on a 360^0 feedback.

ANALYSIS

1. A leader has to be futuristic and visionary.
   The most important factor contributing to the success of every leader is that the leader has to be futuristic and that the leader has to be visionary.

The vision decides the direction of the institution and also provides the employees/ followers a motivation to work for. Every such vision cannot be stagnant but has to be essentially futuristic for the leader to move on. The participants of this training programme have shown a varied level of success in their respective institutions with a great sense of responsibility.

2. Decision making is a key attribute of any leader. The ability to take right decisions at the right time is essential.

   As per Noel Tichy and Warren Bennis in their book Judgment: How Winning Leaders Make Great Calls(DeRose & Tichy, 2008; Ryan, 2009)*,* A third key element of successful leadership involves judgment. Without the right values, judgment can easily be trumped by perverse incentives that encourage poor ethical choices.

   If leadership can be termed as the ability to build an effective team, then a good leader must be someone others are willing to follow. Subordinates identify leaders with four essential characteristics: integrity, judgment, competence, and vision. The success or failure of institutions depends on decision making. Effective leaders process information quickly and make good decisions in a timely way. Also, effective leaders adjust when a mistake is done. Most failures can be attributed to bad decisions that are compounded by an unwillingness to get evaluated and change direction. The welfare of subordinates has a correlation with the judgment of their superiors.

   A leader should be able to make a right judgment keeping a balanced mind and not fall prey to emotions or bias. Truthful words and balanced judgment are highly essential along with an understanding of individual's abilities for good leadership. The right person at the helm of affairs can increase the quantity of resources multifold.

   The participants over the period have shown improved decision making which was timely and was of better quality.

3. A stable mind is required for consistency and prudent decision making in every leader.

   One most essential feature in every leader is the stability of mind while doing any activity or taking a decision. They seem to relax and enjoy when there is a success and go into severe depression and anger when faced with failure.

   Deepak Chopra, the great advocate of Spirituality and a well-known management Guru also feels that Stability is one of the greatest virtues of every leader. Leadership isn't a mystical state or a gift that only some people have, it's a skill. As with any skill, there are do's and don'ts, yet it's easy to be blinded with these, particularly if you aren't getting direct feedback from the people you are leading. This skill has been developed further in this training programme and also put to successful use by the participants.

4. Persistence is a key success factor.

   The factor that will help very much in the long term is persistence.

   Every business including education has a gestation period and the initial years especially will be extremely tough to deal with as there are fewer chances of break-even, leave alone profits.

   Persistence is essential for every leader. His patience can motivate the employees to strive better so that the targets are met. Lack of persistence can denote that firm decisions are not taken and that the leader can back out if there is a small failure.

Strong leadership in any institution requires many virtues: vision, communication skills, project management, empowerment, delegation, coaching skills. One characteristic of effective leaders that you don't often hear about is patience. Leaders require patience because they deal with people, not machines. People are reluctant to change. People always have their comfort zone. It takes a lot of patience to effectively work with people and accomplish the institution's goals and objectives. Although there are appropriate times to be impatient and push an agenda, the astute leader knows that patience is very often his secret weapon in getting things done.

In a world where technology demands speed and the pressure to produce immediate results is all around, disciplining oneself to be patient is tough. Nonetheless, for leaders, it is a challenge worth pursuing. The ability to hold on or to get back up after one has been knocked down is essential to achieve any real success because there will be failures along the way and how one deals with these failures will determine the outcome of any endeavor that is undertaken. The participants agreed that persistence has helped them not only to get success but also more importantly to sustain it.

5. No compromise on ethics.

    The modern leader does compromise many a time on ethics, as he feels that result is more important than the means, but in the long –run the only sustainable thing will be the means of achieving (ethical ways) as compromises may not work always.

    A remarkably high 67% of the world's top 195 leaders believe that one of the key competencies for effective leadership is that the leader needs to have high ethical and moral standards(Giles, 2016). Taken together with communicating clear expectations, these attributes are all about creating a safe and trusting environment. A leader with high ethical standards conveys a commitment to fairness, instilling confidence that both they and their employees will honor the rules of the game. Similarly, when leaders clearly communicate their expectations, they avoid blindsiding people and ensure that everyone is on the same page. In a safe environment, employees can relax, invoking the brain's higher capacity for social engagement, innovation, creativity, and ambition.

    Ethics is the heart of leadership, as reflected in the title of the 1998 leadership classic by Joanne B. Ciulla. Indeed, ethics and leadership should go hand in hand. In his book, Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Leadership, Craig E. Johnson uses the analogy of heroes and villains when discussing how leaders attempt to affect change.

    Ethical leadership can be viewed in terms of healing and energizing powers of love, recognizing that leadership is a reciprocal relation with followers. Leaders serve as role models for their followers and demonstrate the behavioral boundaries set within an institution. The appropriate and desired behavior is enhanced through culture and socialization process of the newcomers. Employees learn about values from watching leaders in action. The more the leader "walks the talk", by translating internalized values into action, the higher level of trust and respect he generates from followers. When leaders are prepared to make personal sacrifices for followers or the company in general for the sake of acting in accordance with their values, the employees are more willing to do the same. The participants agreed that ethics with a high degree of integrity has helped them to lead the team from the front without any blame game. In fact, this characteristic has rubbed on its effect on many working with them.

6. Spiritual- the Necessity to be Leader-i.e., neither soft nor hard or be liberal or strict.-.

Tact and diplomacy are methods used to aid effective communication, especially during the negotiation and when attempting to be persuasive or assertive.

Using tact and diplomacy appropriately can lead to improved relationships with other people and are a way to build and develop mutual respect, which in turn can lead to more successful outcomes and less difficult or stressful communications.

Tact and diplomacy are skills centered on an understanding of other people and being sensitive to their opinions, beliefs, ideas, and feelings. Effective use of such skills comes from being able to sense accurately what another person is feeling or thinking at any given time and then responding in such a way as to avoid bad feelings or awkwardness, whilst at the same time asserting or reflecting your own ideas and feelings back in a delicate and well-meaning fashion. They are often known for being able to resolve conflicts peacefully (and for avoiding conflicts in the first place).

Leaders put less emphasis on challenging their employees, focusing instead on putting their people in positions that leverage their strengths in order to achieve success. Leaders work to avoid having people feel uncomfortable or anxious. Traditional measures of employee satisfaction are often very high for Leaders. For the appropriate people, working for the Leader is a great situation.

A leader should adopt an in-between stance of neither being too soft or liberal nor being harsh or strict. In fact, the stance depends more on the situation and who you are confronted with rather than all other concerns. If a leader is too kind in his dealings people would treat him as a pushover and there will be very less control in his hands.

On the other hand, if one becomes stern and tough, people will get agitated and avoid meeting such leader for any work. So a leader should behave kindly or tough based on the situation. Spirituality in the workplace of the participants has brought in the conflict-free and smooth flow of work.

LIMITATIONS

1. Only 5 leader designates from one institution could be interviewed and discussions could not be done in full detail.
2. The study was limited to leader designates who were trained in the recent batch only.
3. The study is limited to few employees in a similar age group and belonging to the same demography.
4. Some of the factors selected could be more relevant to few institutions only.

CONCLUSION

Leadership training is vital and its design is equally important. Along with implementation and experiential learning it would make the development programme effective and help institutions in their succession planning. Leadership programme that can include the 6 virtues of Vision, decision making, the stability of mind, persistent, ethical and spirituality can lead to better leaders for the future in the education sector.

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