FACULTY MEMBERS' VIEWS ON ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

The study reports and documents an analysis of responses of twenty faculty members in a tertiary institution in Turkey. An interview schedule was prepared to obtain responses from the faculty members on various aspects of academic leadership. The interview questions were prepared in the context of Ramsden's conceptual framework of leadership in higher education. The faculty members' views of academic leadership and their academic leaders were analyzed and the results of the study demonstrate that the faculty see their academic leaders as providing support, resources and an enabling environment that facilitates the academic work of others.

Key words: *academic leadership, academic leader*

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic leadership refers to leadership in an academic setting or institution. Academic leadership is generally characterized as a type of leadership including the roles such as mission, management, generating idea, conducting teamwork, motivating teamwork and creating teams (Law & Glover, 2000). However academic management, teaching, science and research and student counseling are the specific activities that academic leadership basically focuses on (Harman, 2002). Academic leadership is understood to incorporate the core academic functions of teaching/learning, and research and scholarship together with a broader focus on academic values and identity (Joyce and Boyle, 2013). In a higher education institution, some leadership behaviors are expected from academic administrators working in each administrative unit from the highest point to the lowest point (Çelik, 2011). Information production, transfer, and delivery, bringing benefits to society through research and development activities, providing lifelong education, being a pioneer and follower of rapid changes in technology and information require higher education institutions' managers to show new leadership behaviors (Yeşilyurt, 2007). A strong academic leadership is needed to ensure quality and effectiveness in higher education institutions and for universities to build a culture focusing on value and culture. An academic leader tries to carry university in integration with its own history, culture and structure into the global world (Çelik, 2011). On the other hand, universities have a different structure from other public or private organizations. And unlike private organizations which are accountable to shareholders, they are accountable to stakeholders like students, employees, funding agencies and nongovernmental organizations. Because of these reasons, academic leadership becomes necessary.

2. DISCUSSION OF ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

Leaders play a large role in the organization's vision, direction, employee morale, integrity, level of communication, values, trust, respect, and overall effectiveness and success (Pate& Angell, 2013). The leadership of an institution is responsible for making decisions that affect the lives and responsibilities of the faculty, staff, and students of the college (Pate& Angell, 2013). The concept of Academic Leadership has been given by Ramsden (1998) and he suggests that leadership in higher education have features as; leadership in teaching i.e. introducing new ideas of teaching, adding excitement teaching, leadership in research i.e. leader must set his own research examples and provide guidance for the staff, strategy vision and networking i.e. leader should make clear goals and express those to everyone, collaborative and motivational leadership i.e. leader should inspire people to give their full and try to achieve difficult objectives also there should be openness and an environment of trust and

support, fair and efficient management i.e. delegating task and organize the tasks, development and recognition of performance i.e. praise people work and provide them with feedback and give them support, interpersonal skills i.e. look into other peoples interests. These dimensions of leadership capture not only what leaders might be expected to know and be able to do, but suggest how they should do it (e.g. fairly, efficiently).

For the purposes of this study, academic leadership has been defined as any position with supervisory capacity over the faculty members. These positions include, but are not limited to, the division chair, department chair, associate dean, coordinator of academic programs, dean, chief academic officer, school head and president. Attention was given to the faculty member's perception of the leadership qualities academic leader possess or must possess. The aim of this research is to build up a picture of how academic leadership is conceived by faculty members.

3. METHOD AND APPROACH

A total of 20 one-to-one interviews were conducted. Interviewees came from 2 different institutions. Of those interviewed 2 were Assistant Professors and 18 Lecturers. All of the interviews were conducted face-to-face and they lasted on average between 20 and 30 minutes. The semi-structured interview schedule asked questions about six features of academic leadership which Ramsden suggested (1998): (1) leadership in teaching; (2) leadership in research; (3) collaborative and motivational leadership; (4) fair and efficient management; (5) development and recognition of performance; (6) interpersonal skills. Interviews were recorded and transcribed (using codes rather than names to protect confidentiality) and a thematic analysis of participants' experiences and expectations of academic leadership was conducted by the researcher. The key findings from this analysis are outlined below. Quotes from interviewees' responses are provided to illustrate the identified themes. A respondent number (allowing the reader to identify quotes by the interviewee) is provided at the end of each quote, for example; *P1, P2,* meaning *Participant 1, Participant 2, etc.*

4. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this section findings from the analysis of the interviews are reported. It has been structured into six parts as the number of the questions as follows: (1) faculty members' views on effective leadership in teaching, (2) faculty members' views on effective leadership in research, (3) faculty members' views on fair and efficient management, (4) faculty members' views on their academic leaders' motivation strategies, (5) faculty members' views on their academic leaders' support for development, (6) faculty members' views on their academic leaders' ınterpersonal skills.

4.1. Faculty Members' Views on Effective Leadership in Teaching

Interviewees' opinions about effective leadership in teaching were analyzed and thematic analysis indicated four main categories of response, as mentioned below:

Effective leadership in teaching means supporting faculty members' development in teaching

Almost all of the participants describe effective teaching in leadership as 'supporting faculty members' development in teaching'. According to participants, effective leadership in teaching is described as follows:

"Organizing activities like seminars and workshops to speed the faculty members' professional development" (P3).

"Supporting and participating activities organized by faculty members. For example, we invited the previous Head of School to a department exhibition. He passed by the exhibition and looked aside. That made me and my friends sad very much. Then I thought that I would never hold an exhibition again" (P7).

"Having an inspiring and motivating attitude towards faculty members' publish academic work and organize and participate in academic events yet encouraging faculty members to have academic career and develop their professional skills" (P6).

Effective leadership in teaching means bringing new ideas about teaching into the department

Another participant describes effective teaching leader as the person who surprises and helps to overcome her:

"I expect effective teaching leader to bring different perspectives to the work I do, surprise and make me think and convince me that I am able to do better. For example, he always weighs our words at meetings and does his best to meet the demands. But he is usually short on time and we cannot have detailed meetings" (P 11).

Effective leadership in teaching means providing necessary resources for teaching

Participants' another definition for effective leadership in teaching is providing necessary teaching resources. Participants' views on this category are as follows:

"Supplying teaching resources like projection, sound system and laptop we need during classes and keeping them in working condition is important. It is vital to have opportunity to be able to photocopy or print class materials" (P1).

"Effective instructional leader is the person who does his best to satisfy faculty members' demands for teaching and provides necessary equipment" (P5).

"Effective instructional leader is the person who makes an effort to improve laboratory conditions and develop applied education" (P9).

Effective leadership in teaching means being a role model in teaching

The participants who view effective instructional leader as frontrunner in instructional activities express their opinions as follows:

"Of course I expect my leader himself to be meticulous, master and outstanding in instructional activities in addition to research activities" (P1).

"Effective instructional leader is the person who behaves outstandingly in instructional activities" (P5)

4.2. Faculty Members' Views on Effective Leadership in Research

The faculty members' responses to the question about effective leadership in research were analyzed and thematic analysis indicated two main categories of response. Interviewees describe effective leadership in research as "inspiring respect for own ability as a researcher; leading by example" and "providing guidance in scholarly practices":

Effective leadership in research means providing guidance in scholarly practices

The interviewees who describe effective leadership in research as providing guidance in scholarly practices replied:

"Effective leadership in research is paving the way for faculty members to do academic research, publishing periodicals and books in which faculty members publish their research papers, finding a sponsor for periodical publishing and organizing academic activities like conferences and symposiums" (P6).

"Effective leadership in research is sharing experiences and knowledge about research methods and processes to be followed and establishing coordination and work sharing during research activities" (P8).

"Effective leadership in research is enabling multidisciplinary studies via multidisciplinary research groups, improving the research infrastructure of universities through different projects and encouraging faculty members to publish research paper in prominent periodicals" (P9).

Effective leadership in research means inspiring respect for own ability as a researcher; leading by example

The interviewees who describe effective leadership in research as inspiring respect for own ability as a researcher; leading by example replied:

"An effective leader should lead research activities in order to improve education activities. He must himself do research to be a role model for his coworkers and support their research projects. It is especially important to do research for faculty members. At this point university administration must support the faculty members in their research activities financially when the circumstances allow. And this support must be provided equally to each applicant" (P5).

4.3. Faculty Members' Views on Fair and Efficient Management

The faculty members' responses to the question about fair and efficient management were analyzed and thematic analysis indicated two main categories of response. Interviewees describe fair and efficient management as "treating everyone equally" and "accountability":

Fair and efficient management means treating everyone equally

The responses of the interviewees show that most of the faculty members define fair and efficient management as treating everyone equally. Interviewees' replies regarding to this category are as in the following:

"Fair and efficient management is to ensure that every faculty member take responsibility and do their duty without any discrimination of age or seniority and, to support them to participate in activities that will contribute to their personal and professional development" (P13).

"If the manager provides an advantage, makes things easier and shows concern for everybody in the same way he does to his closer coworkers who with he has lunch and hangs out together outside the office, that's the fair and efficient management. If the manager is loyal to the justice in resource allocation and task sharing and if he is managing without discrimination, then fair and efficient management can be possible" (P1).

Fair and efficient management means being accountable

Some of the interviewees describe fair and efficient management as "accountability". One of these interviewees replied:

"Fundamental of fair and efficient management is accountability. Every decision made needs to have an explanation and this explanation needs to be shared by all the coworkers in the institution. Fair and efficient management necessitates that job definitions are clear and workload is distributed among faculty members fairly. Performance evaluation should be done accurately for each faculty member in each unit. I think our university has better approaches towards to accountability compared to the past nevertheless it is not in the required level." (P11).

4.4. Faculty Members' Views on Their Academic Leaders' Motivation Strategies

The interviewees were asked "How does your academic leader motivate you?". Following the analysis of the interviewees' answers, such a frame about academic leaders' motivation strategies can be formed:

My academic leader improves the work environment

Most of the interviewees emphasize that their academic leaders motivate them by improving the work environment. Concerning this category, the interviewees replied:

"My academic leader tries to prepare charming environment for academic work. He is the editor of a scientific periodical, he gives faculty members permission to do academic career, he encourages faculty members to continue their professional development and helps faculty members to organize academic activities (conferences, seminars)" (P6).

"My academic leader does not practice any strategies to motivate us. We motivate ourselves. But if work environment is healthy and peaceful and if the leaders have good relations with the coworkers it can be a source of motivation. My academic leader tries to establish an environment that is based on mutual respect and trust" (P1).

"My academic leader attends to each coworker's requests and issues one by one and offers solutions that will please them" (P5).

My academic leader takes the lead in teaching and research activities

Some of the interviewees express that their academic leaders motivate them by leading forth in teaching and research activities. These interviewees replied:

"My academic leader keeps us posted about scientific seminars, conferences and similar organizations. He often listens to our problems and suggestions at meetings and incorporates us into the decision making process" (P13).

"My academic leader motivates us by saying it over and over again to publish research paper, do master degree or doctorate, keep in touch with students and improve ourselves by following training activities in our area of specialization" (P12).

"My academic leader always mentions our achievements. He always reminds that we teach English to 3500 students every year. He cares about statistics" (P11).

"Our scientific research is supported, and appreciated at the end of the academic year. Our timetable is prepared properly to set aside time for scientific research" (P8).

"My academic leader helps us materially and morally to participate in scientific meetings like seminars, panels and conferences" (P7).

4.5. Faculty Members' Views on Their Academic Leaders' Support for Development

The interviewees were asked "How does your academic leader support your development". Their answers were analyzed and it was found all of the interviewees agreed that their academic leaders support themselves to learn new things.

My academic leader provides support for learning new things

The interviewees who think their academic leaders support themselves to learn new things replied:

"We have a weekday off for our academic studies. Our academic leader shows a positive attitude about to get promotion after we finish our doctorate. He subsidizes for the internal or international scientific conferences that we attend. He even shows a positive attitude when faculty members ask for longer educational leaves" (P6).

"While the academic leader is constructing our timetable he takes in consideration our master or doctorate schedule" (P1).

"My academic leader organizes workshops, teacher training seminars and conferences for faculty members. He encourages us to participate in those events and allows us to participate in the events organized by other institutions" (P11).

4.6. Faculty Members' Views on Their Academic Leaders' Interpersonal Skills

The interviewees were asked "How do you describe your academic leader's interpersonal skills?" and their answers were analyzed. As a result of the analysis it was found that all of the faculty members describe their academic leaders' interpersonal skills as "Communicating well and having concern for others".

My academic leader communicates well and has concern for others

Faculty members' views on their academic leaders' interpersonal skills are as in the example:

"My academic leader's interpersonal dialogue and communication skills are really good. For instance, if I need help I can ask for it easily and he helps me as best as he can to solve my problems" (P5).

"My academic leader is compatible with the faculty members. He tries to evaluate us objectively and he has a constructive and responsible attitude in academic and managerial issues. He is acommodationist in interpersonal relationships and he consults us during decision making process. He is moderate and sympathetic in interpersonal relationships" (P6).

"He does not have an authoritarian or oppressive management style. Besides he always finds a way out of a problem" (P13).

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings received from the analysis of the interviews show that the faculty describes efficient leadership in teaching as supporting faculty members' development in teaching, bringing new ideas about teaching into the department, providing necessary resources for teaching and being a role model in teaching. These findings align with what Siddique, Aslam, Khan and Fatima (2011) emphasize in their study that they are the academic leaders who should provide the faculty with proper opportunities for personal development, and challenging and novel teaching experiences, also motivate them to do research and publications, as well as arrange workshops, seminars conferences for their knowledge and skill development and perform proper training and development activities.

The faculty describes effective leadership in research as providing guidance in scholarly practices, inspiring respect for own ability as a researcher and leading by example. According to Sarros, Gmelch and Tanewski's research (2006) one of the four discrete aspects of the dean's role is dean as scholar. The scholarship aspect relates to maintaining a research profile individually as well as building the faculty's research strengths. Similarly, Siddique and friends state that universities are the places of conducting research. An academic leader should foster research culture in his organization, he should motivate his colleagues, arrange funds for research, act as team builder and team leader to achieve mutually coordinated goals, and provide proper resources to his followers (2011).

It was found that interviewees describe fair and efficient management as treating everyone equally and being accountable. Likewise, Bryman (2007) defined leadership behaviours associated with leadership effectiveness at departmental level and he mentioned treating academic staff fairly and with integrity, being trustworthy and having personal integrity, acting as a role model, creating a positive work atmosphere in the department, providing feedback on performance, providing resources for and adjusting workloads to stimulate scholarship and research. On the other hand, Jones points out that (2011) head of departments are to be good role models educationally, and it should be self-evident that they are also to be good role models ethically. This determines how they undertake their administrative and scholarly endeavours, and how they advance or hinder the careers and prospects of those for whom they have responsibility.

The faculty states that academic leaders motivate instructors through improving work environment and leading the faculty in educational and research activities. These findings align with findings of a study (Bolden, Peters, Gosling &Ryan, 2012) which indicates that academics across the sector recognize leadership in actions that provide and protect an environment that enables productive academic work. Tourish (2010) also makes the same point with the results of this study and states that heads have the

task of supporting productive staff members who are not star performers in research, and increasing their motivation in the face of obvious demoralization.

Interviewees claim that their academic leaders support their professional development by encouraging themselves to learn new things. According to Sarros and friends research (2006) one of the four discrete aspects of the dean's role is dean as faculty (academic staff) developer. Staff developer is the human resource aspect of developing academic staff and appraising their performance.

According to interviewees, their academic leaders' interpersonal skills are good and the academic leaders have concern for others. As all key challenges of academic leadership have a human dimension, it is important to have a high level of interpersonal capability in order to better understand what is happening and to sort out what might work best to resolve the situation (Scott, Coates and Anderson, 2008). Knox (1977) maintained that: Leadership means dealing with people. In order to build a good working relationship with department members, the chair must try to understand their perceptions. With understanding comes a realization of the type of approach, which will work best in supervising and motivating the staff (p. 6).

All in all, the faculty see their academic leaders as providing support, resources and an enabling environment that facilitates the academic work of others.

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