Leadership and Innovation in a School Culture: How can a leader bring about innovation in the School culture?

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Abstract

This paper discusses that how a leader along with leadership can bring about innovation in a school culture, Leadership is a social process of influence in which one person can provide vision to his members in accomplishing a common task with an extra-ordinary style. Distributed leadership is the best option in the present era. Every employee in a school should be given equal opportunities to involve and decide in order to excel in their field, Innovation begins with creative ideas and when these ideas and plans are implemented only then a real innovation takes place, Policy makers should design policy according to values and customs of the society along with the modern era demands, Curriculum planning should also reflect the needs of the students, Teaching methodologies should be versatile, The relationship should be healthy among the members of the school. Assessment and evaluation system should be revised for better scrutiny of student's performance, Motivation and reinforcement can help the employees to work hard, Co-curricular activities and classroom culture should be encouraging, Job satisfaction, diversity, equality, flexibility, accommodation, activity based learning and ethical behavior; all these factors let the culture and organizations to come up with innovative actions.
 Key words: Innovation, school culture, leadership, motivation.
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Introduction

        The role of Education in any society is to preserve the knowledge, re-orient the culture and transfer the pre-dispositions to the younger generation. Schools are the

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major institutes which play a vital role in bringing innovation in our society and culture. Innovation means to bring a successful change by reshaping, adjusting and matching the theory with existing norms. We have to see that how a leader can bring innovation in a school culture? What is the role of leadership in it? Leaders are the ones who could observe and analyze the weak areas or problems and work on it by planning and acting on the strategy. The leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who aim real changes and outcomes that reveal their shared purposes. Leadership involves bringing change, not maintaining status quo.

The leader creates a vision and strategy. He acts as a coach, facilitator and also as a servant. He helps his subordinates to learn and grow through experiences. He is the one who sets the mission of an institute or an organization. He is the one who thinks about an innovation. Many characteristics in a leader make him distinguished among others. He is energetic, intelligent, self-confident, honest, enthusiastic, independent, cooperative, responsible and persistent against obstacles and barriers. McGregor (1960), developed two sets of assumptions about human nature called theory X and theory Y, these theories help the leader how to interact and influence the subordinates. Theory X states that subordinates must be controlled and directed but this cannot work in the modern era. Theory Y can be helpful for good productivity because the leader is people-oriented and also task-oriented. William Ouchi states Z management theory which focuses on increasing the employee's loyalty towards an organization or institute to promote stable employment, high productivity and high employee's morale and satisfaction. We can say that theory Y and Z together can be helpful for leading effective organizations and culture.

The culture in the school means the shared beliefs, values, norms, standards, expectations, curriculum policies, co-curricular activities, curricula focus, educational policy, rituals and decision making processes among the members of that organization. The school culture can be divided into two parts; academic and co-academic. The academic means classroom culture and co-academic means the culture of overall institution. The classroom culture should be based on practical learning and creativity. The overall culture of an institution should also be based on cooperation, encouragement and good interpersonal relationships. The relationship between leader and the members is also significant. Likely, the relationship among members of the school should also be healthy. The principal plays the role of a leader who is responsible to take the teachers, head teachers, clerical staff, parents and students with him on the path of innovation, but the principal should consult with every member of the institution in order to lay the foundation of distributed leadership. Distributed leadership means to share leadership responsibilities across an organization. This helps to develop many learning-centered leaders who work hard to

attain the goal of improving the quality of teaching, learning and outcomes of students.

The focus should also be on the best interaction between teacher and the students, if the students follow their teachers truly then the innovation in a school culture has a hope to exist and t1ourish. The ethics, character, skills, knowledge and abilities of a principal help him/her to let the members follow him without any doubt. He sets the goals and targets which should be achieved through proper planning and actions. The principal thinks about an innovation and shares his ideas with every member of his school culture. The big innovation comes in the way of those people who get ready for a change, who are flexible enough to adapt according to new infrastructure and environment.

If we want to bring an innovation in a school culture then firstly, the attitudes and behaviors of the individuals working in the schools must be positive and optimistic towards the change; they should accept the idea of change. The motivation and reinforcement should be provided by the principal to the teachers and students. The in-service training of the staff should be according to the tasks assigned to them, like this continuous development in knowledge takes place which develops confidence in staff members and polish their inherent qualities. Team building helps the tasks to be done in an efficient manner. The set goals should be achievable not always ideal. The best organization and culture exists because they set targets and objectives to attain the goals. They always look behind and assess themselves that what has been done and what can be done further. The curriculum in the school should be according to the culture, traditions and values. The educational policy should be set for the betterment of institutes, students, teachers and parents; it can be re-modified after formative and summative evaluation. The teachers should be involved in every task and decision related to school success. In the classroom no student should be left behind, everyone has the right to be educated. The teaching strategies used by the teachers should be abundant. Teachers should be trained to use strategies according the needs of the students. The assessment and examination system should be valid and reliable. The behaviors of students and teachers should also be checked upon for improvement and better personality. Cooperation among the members related to school culture should be appreciated, parent-teacher meetings are arranged to see the outcomes and discuss upon weak areas. The leaders should also consult with parents in order to know their intentions and plans. Like this so many aspects and dimensions have come in our way which should be looked upon and restructured, thus the way becomes visible for thinking and bringing an innovation.

In the school culture there are three key players; students, teachers and principal. Student is at the top whose academic needs are to be fulfilled by the teacher and in the last comes the principal who is the host and has to create and organize such an environment. The facilities provided to the students must be assessed frequently according to their needs. The physical and learning environment of school and classroom should be healthy and encouraging. Constructivism is the learning theory in which students learn through experiences and interaction of ideas, this theory can be applied practically in a classroom. Team-teaching, and group-based learning can show brilliant results. The teacher must identify the weak areas and analyze the problems of students. The teacher is then able to choose a strategy and interact with the student for his betterment. The teachers and other staff members can also suffer from personal and psychological problems; the principal should minimize or resolve the conflict between members and involve the teachers or members in diverse activities to let them out of their problems.

The principal should make his members feel comfortable; the staff must be given allowances. The challenging tasks can be assigned to let the members find out brighter side in them. The principal can take an institute to the peak of success by developing cohesiveness among his members. The equality among the members is the new millennium goal. The curriculum should be managed according to the present demands. The activities and participation of students should be enhanced. The leader must decide the vision of an institute; he can motivate people to work hard for bringing change in coming years. The principal can involve teachers in decision making process. The sustainability of an institute must also be checked that what it would it look like in future, will all the rules be maintained or changed? The goals and objectives should be transparent and achievable. The multiculturalism should also be encouraged in a school culture. The prevailing values of the culture should be kept in mind while designing curriculum and activities. Ethics in leadership and education should also be maintained and followed. The principal should be cautious and involve every teacher and staff member along with parents and students to make distributed and community leadership a reality.

Watt (2002) says that innovative schools have a culture that allows innovation to take place. A fundamental element of this pillar is the 'entrepreneurial' and 'risk taking spirit'. The ethics of an innovative school gives importance to collaboration. Teachers work jointly to generate new ideas, learn new skills, and build up programs. According to Watt (2002), leadership that promotes innovation requires leaders who have a lucid vision of where they desire to take their school, have a commitment and enthusiasm for change, as well as bear risk taking and lead.

Ainscow and West (2006) suggested that school leaders should be t1exible in adapting their approach and style to changing conditions. On the other hand, they have to be directive, facilitative, transformational and transactional at the same time. A leader should be creating an information-rich environment and a constructive school culture. He can build a learning community along with uninterrupted professional development by linking with parents and external resources. Many evidences show that principals have been very important figures in promoting sustainable changes; but their leadership has been less 'visionary'. On the other hand, it is said that leadership should be much more distributed (Spillane, 2006). School culture is not an inactive entity. It is constantly being created and shaped through interactions with others and through ret1ections on life and the world (Finnan, 2000). School culture develops as staff members cooperate with each other, with the students and the community. It guides for the behavior that is shared among members of the school. Culture is formed by the interactions of the personnel, and the deeds of the personnel are directed by the culture.

The Educational policy makers should look out for the needs and demands of the students nationwide. They should be having knowledge about the educational scenario at the international level. This policy should provide opportunities to the planners and designers to bring on a curriculum which could produce competent people. These individuals can then take the leading positions in the future. The books based on new curriculum should be having a fine content with multiple activities. These activities can be helpful to engage students in thought-provoking process. The boards that are responsible to publish books should be doing their job actively and timely.

The training of teachers is also an important factor for bringing innovation. Seminars, workshops and conferences can lead to professional growth and development of teachers. The administrators, heads and directors of the institutions should have healthy relations with the principal and staff of an institute. They can provide opportunities to the staff in order to successfully take forward their teaching and leading career. Varieties of teaching methodologies lead to brilliant outcomes. The practical and activity-based teaching and learning can be helpful for students. The weekly evaluation of student performance can guide the teacher to accelerate the learning speed of student. Only monthly, half-yearly and yearly exams aren't sufficient in checking student's progress level. Classroom culture should be participative in nature; every student has a right to ask questions to enhance his knowledge and learning. Teacher is a leader in the classroom and guides the students' in learning activities.

Watt (2002) explains the structures and processes found in innovative schools as flexible, allowing for sharing of knowledge and the skills to work in teams (p. 10). Innovative schools provide teachers with facility of resources and construct powerful community relationships.

The teacher can decide any activity and learning aid used for the students. The co-curricular activities create a healthy environment for sports and learning too. The administration should be arranging sports and other activities like debates, role plays, quizzes, poetry contests, writing and reading contests. Due to these, the students become active participants in the classroom. Feedback can encourage the students to learn and also work hard. Motivation and job satisfaction from the leader can take the employees towards the achievement of goal of an organization and an institute. In 1943, psychologist Abraham Maslow published his need hierarchy theory of motivation, according to him physiological needs, security and safety, social affiliation, esteem and self actualization are five basic needs which should be fulfilled for the sake of professional development and organizational effectiveness. Maslow said that one cannot be motivated by higher needs until the lower needs are met. The basic needs are food, shelter, air and water but in an institute the teachers and clerical staff should be having satisfaction towards job, salary, seniority and retirement plans. Security and safety of job position should be confirmed by the heads of the institutes. Social affiliation means that every teacher and staff member should be indulged in professional associations and unions. The acceptance by the peers motivates an individual a lot. Self esteem means feeling self-respect, gaining recognition, promotion and awards from the higher authority which can enhance the performance of staff. Self actualizationhelps the individuals to work at their full potential, they feel successful at work. They can achieve significant goals. They become creative and competent. The lower needs should be firstly met and then the higher needs like esteem and self actualization are likely to be met. The leader should be concerned about these needs of employees and then only any culture or learning organization comes up with an idea of innovation.

The researches don't clearly support this theory, it is said that the satisfied need may lose its motivational potential so that is why the leader should motivate employees by devising programs or practices aimed at satisfying unmet needs. On the other hand, still this theory helps to create coherence in a school culture and learning organization. Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation states that two totally different dimensions contribute to worker's behavior. The first dimension is hygiene factors, which consists the presence or absence of job dissatisfies such as working conditions, pay, company policies and interpersonal relationships. When these factors are poor then surely the teachers cannot work properly.

The leader should look after these needs of employees so that they could work whole heartedly. The second dimension is motivators which fulfill higher level needs including achievement, recognition, responsibility and personal growth. These motivators along with good hygiene factors help the individuals to work with sincerity and loyalty. Lok and Crawford (2004) say that when employees are dissatisfied at work they are less committed and look out for other opportunities. If opportunities are not available, then the employees may mentally or emotionally withdraw from the organization.

The leader is responsible for creating such a healthy and learning environment in an institute. When the teachers would be motivated to teach well then the students would come up with excellent grades and performance. Empowerment and increased responsibilities leads to greater motivation, satisfaction. The teachers can be allowed to take any decision regarding the betterment of school and school culture along with principals, the sense of ownership takes them ahead.

The leader (principal) is responsible to accept diversity in the staff members and recognize them on the base of equality. The opportunities and chances should be equally provided to work force. Every member in the school should have healthy relationship with other members. Ethics should be also followed; the leader is responsible to consider the needs and problems of employees, he cannot be just rude, arrogant and stubborn. The leader is the problem solver who comes with multiple solutions and ends up or manages the cont1icts between the workers. On the other hand, the members of staff should also be ethical in their behavior, they should cooperate and do work with honesty, they should not be hurting others feelings. Humiliating and insulting attitude should not be encouraged. The teachers should also be polite towards the students and understand their problems. Distributed leadership is the best practice in which every member of school is able to involve themselves in decision making process. Flexibility, accommodation, compensation, quality performance and morale building all these factors lead to an effective organization working within school culture.

Charismatic leadership can bring about innovative ideas, we can say if a principal is a charismatic leader who brings about new policies and rules then the teachers are those managers who implement those rules and thus innovation takes place. In a school culture, students should also have a counseling session which could help them to be strong personalities. Their psychological problems, problems in opting careers could be solved. The ethical leader possess humility, maintains concern for the greater good, fulfills commitments, strives for fairness, takes responsibility, shows respect, encourages and develops others, serve others and stands

up for right things. The school principal should have all these qualities in him/her to let the teachers work to their full potential and leave behind the traditional ways of teaching and learning. The principal is also responsible to evaluate the performance of teachers for their better learning.

As Muijs and Cols. (2004) pointed out: "Learning schools are characterized by the occurrence of insightful dialogue, in which staff carry out conversations about students and teaching and learning, identifying associated issues and problems" They are also "engaged in constant enhancement efforts and enquiring into both within-school conditions and out-or-school developments, rather than being simply imprudent to check up or government initiatives". Now if we want to bring an innovation in school culture then the leader should align the creative acts of teachers towards the school's purpose, vision and goals. Principals can encourage the exploring ideas of staff and allow them to work on their ideas because innovation doesn't come up with one person, all the members work coherently for it. The leader should provide freedom to the workers in choosing a method for doing task. Effective design of group work should bemade for better results. The creative people should be given tools and resources for carrying out their work efficiently. Gentle feedback is also necessary for good performance. People should be allowed to share creative ideas and innovation must not stop.

Concluding Thoughts

Innovation can be brought in a school culture if a principal encourages creativity in teachers and let them lead in their classrooms. Many minds can bring good ideas. Leaders should motivate, reinforce, guide, and facilitate their followers. The policies, rules and regulations set by the principal for running a school must be accepted by the teachers. The teachers should be comfortable to discuss any problem with the head and decide things. Similarly, the teacher should encourage the creativity in students and let them explore new things. The teachers should be given rewards like bonuses, promotions and recognition for good work.

The students' efforts should also be appreciated. The educational policy and curriculum should be according to the values and traditions of present culture. The teachers' professional growth makes them loyal towards an institute and they work sincerely. The classroom culture can be rich if it is having a learning environment. Diverse teaching methods enhance the student's learning. Involve the students in activity and let them find a solution to a problem. Distributed leadership is the demand of new era; it gives empowerment to employees and let them realize their capabilities. Action research can be helpful to find out problems and work on them. When all these factors are looked after then only an innovative plan can be

implemented. After implementation, the continuous evaluation of innovation process is also compulsory.

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