

Leadership: Higher Education Administration

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Abstract

Higher education administration, at all levels, has become an extremely intricate task, which includes human relations compounded by limited financial resources and the continuous quality improvement needs.

The administrator is responsible for enrollment, securing external funds, and improving the economic condition of his or her institutions, among endless other tasks, while resolving potential conflicting issue such as increased enrollment and the possible impact on the quality of instructional and student services. Thus, the path to this accomplishment must be of leadership, and not management, and should include shared values and decision making.

Higher education has historically been slow to adopt many successful processes. However, while the organizational cultures may be different, there are common elements that characterize effective leadership. For example, Covey¹ has identified seven habits of highly effective people. These include:

1. Be Proactive: Principles of Personal Vision;
2. Begin with the End in Mind: Principles of Personal Leadership;
3. Put First Things First: Principles of Personal Management;
4. Think Win/Win: Principles of Interpersonal Leadership;
5. Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood;
6. Synergize Principles of Creative Communication; and
7. Sharpen the Saw: Principles of Balanced Self-Renewal.

Within the context of this paper, the authors will define and explore the application of Covey's principles to academic leadership at Eastern Michigan University.

Introduction

Higher education administration, at all levels, has become an extremely intricate task, which includes human relations compounded by limited financial resources and the continuous quality improvement needs.

The administrator is responsible for enrollment, securing external funds, and improving the economic condition of his or her institutions, among endless other tasks, while resolving potential conflicting issue such as increased enrollment and the possible impact on the quality of instructional and student services. Thus, the path to this accomplishment must be of leadership, and not management.

The ideology of management and leadership has been researched for decades, including more recent ones as ‘Servant-Leadership’ by Robert Greenleaf and ‘The Pursuit of Wow’ by Tom Peters among others. Furthermore, Eidgahy² has identified two kinds of power within academic administration. These are ‘power associated with a given position’ and ‘power that comes from personal resources’. Moreover, Hecht, Higgerson, Gmelch, and Turcker³ state that in working with faculty, four conditions for leadership have been identified. These are to serve as facilitative leader, to facilitate/encourage teamwork, collective decisions and actions, and reward collectively where possible. However, Covey^{1 & 4} feels that many of the challenges associated with leadership in American culture are directly related to the failure to properly developing people in a positive way who promote self-fulfillment through contribution to others. At the same time, Tom Peters’ ideas about placing customer at the center of the priority structure, and therefore stressing the pragmatic aspects of higher education administration are seen as essential to the survival of higher education.

Burns⁵ and Bass⁶ have examined the theory of transformational leadership and state that importance should be given to transforming rather than transactional. Furthermore, according to Senge⁷, transformational leadership is about developing a learning organization where the ability to learn is the competitive advantage. In other words, Bass⁸ has considered transformational leadership as a circumstance where the leader improves perception about matters through articulation, in contrast to routine daily transactional leadership, which is based on an exchange for rewards. Bass⁹ proposes that transformational leadership goes beyond the status quo by enhancing efforts and placing value on change-orientated leadership practice.

According to The National Academy for Academic Leadership¹⁰, there are barriers to change, including a tendency to mandate change from the top, operating from wrong cultural assumptions, an organizational structure that does not facilitate cooperation, a habit of critique, and a lack of knowledge on the part of leaders about team building. However, while the organizational cultures may be different, there are common elements that characterize effective leadership, according to Covey¹. For example, he has identified seven habits of highly effective people. These include:

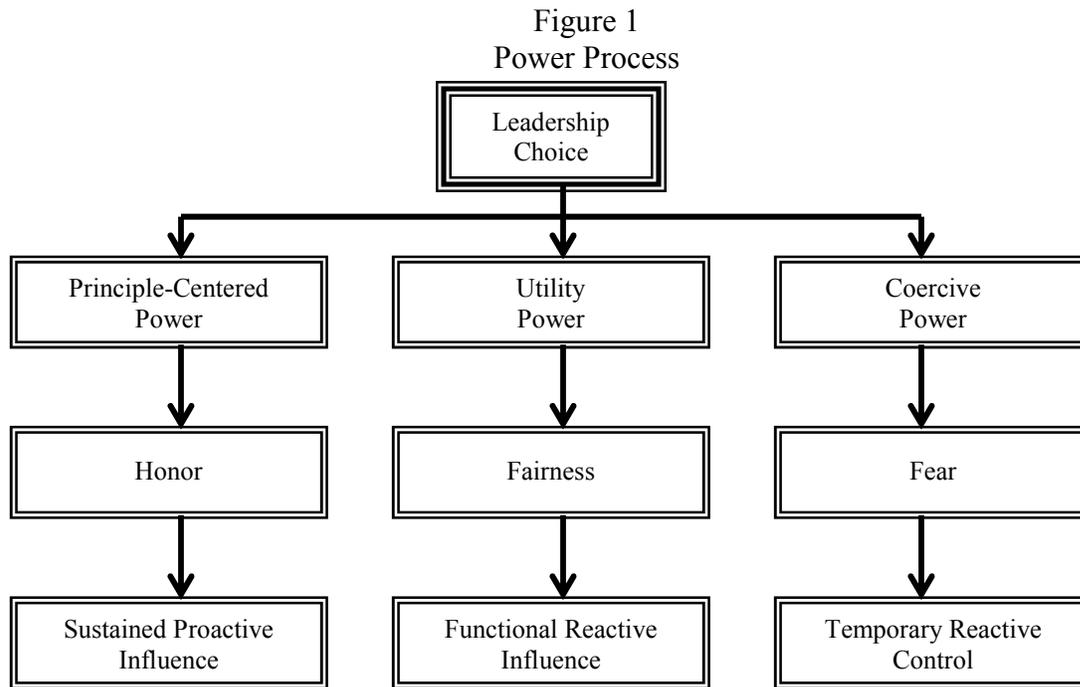
1. Be Proactive: Principles of Personal Vision;
2. Begin with the End in Mind: Principles of Personal Leadership;
3. Put First Things First: Principles of Personal Management;
4. Think Win/Win: Principles of Interpersonal Leadership;

5. Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood;
6. Synergize Principles of Creative Communication; and
7. Sharpen the Saw: Principles of Balanced Self-Renewal.

Thus, higher education administration should be developed on the basis of a supporting leadership structure as contrast to power and authority (management).

In his book (Covey⁴) *Principle-Centered Leadership*, he presents a new model of leadership choice (Figure 1). He states that leaders have choices when making decisions that are on the basis of coercive, utility, or principles. These choices and decisions are also limited by the leader's personal character. The task is rather easy to use position and rank to influence others when there is not any interactive skills or capacity to remain true to values. Thus, many options are available to leaders in the areas of utility and coercive power. However, a long-term commitment is required, if a leader wants to use principle-centered leadership. Covey⁴ establishes that:

“Trust in relationships, which is the foundation of principle-centered power, cannot be fabricated ad hoc. Sincerity cannot be faked for long. Eventually leaders reveal themselves. And what a leader is, beyond what the leader can do to or for followers, ultimately determines the depth of principle-centered power he has.” (Principle-Centered Leadership, 1992, P. 105).



From: Cover, S. R. (1992). *Principle-Centered Leadership*; P. 106.

Easter Michigan University is a comprehensive university committed to excellence in teaching through traditional and innovative approaches, the extension of knowledge through basic and applied research, and creative and artistic expression. Building on a proud tradition of national leadership in the preparation of teachers, we maximize educational opportunities and personal

and professional growth for students from diverse backgrounds through an array of baccalaureate, master's and doctoral programs. We strive to provide a student-focused learning environment that enhances the lives of students and positively impacts the community. We extend our commitment beyond the campus boundaries to the wider community through service initiatives, and public and private partnerships of mutual interest addressing local, regional, national and international opportunities and challenges. Eastern Michigan University values participatory decision-making. The University's guiding principles state, "We believe that effective organizations are characterized by visionary leadership and participatory decision-making at all levels." We are committed to creating and supporting an environment that fosters open communication and innovative approaches to change.

Methodology

Within the context of this paper, a questionnaire survey was developed to examine the perception of Eastern Michigan University's department heads in reference to Covey's common elements of effective leadership. The questionnaire, appendix 1, was sent out to twenty-four department heads, and a total of eighteen, or seventy-five percent, returned the completed survey. Respondents were asked to respond to each statement twice. The first response sought to identify importance of each element, while the second response asked how these administrators saw the current practice. The Pearson correlation was employed to determine the degree that the two variables "Importance" and "Practice" were correlated in this study. In other words, authors wanted to ascertain the existence of any correlation between the two variables of "Importance" and "Practice"; and to find out the perception of significance of the two variables "importance" and "practice" based on the weighted ranking of sample's responses among the seven elements.

Findings

Analysis of data revealed correlation between the two variables "Importance" and "Practice" in the questionnaire survey, as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Correlation of Importance and Practice Variables

Habits of highly effective people	Variable	Pearson Correlation	Significance Level
Be Proactive: Principles of Personal Vision	Importance Practice	-0.013	0.959
Begin with the End in Mind: Principles of Personal Leadership	Importance Practice	0.173	0.493
Put First Things First: Principles of Personal Management.	Importance Practice	0.416	0.089
Think Win/Win: Principles of Interpersonal Leadership.	Importance Practice	0.671	0.013*
Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood.	Importance Practice	-0.015	0.952
Synergize Principles of Creative Communication.	Importance Practice	0.506	0.032*
Sharpen the Saw: Principles of Balanced Self-Renewal.	Importance Practice	0.354	0 .150

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Tables 2 and 3 show the perception of significance of the two factors in the survey based on the weighted ranking of sample's responses. Table two exhibits the ranking of factor "Importance", and table three illustrates the ranking of factor "Practice". For example, question number one was ranked one as relates to factor "Importance" among the seven questions in the survey, and question two was ranked four among the seven survey questions in "Importance" factor.

Table 2: Importance

Habits of highly effective people	Rank
Be Proactive: Principles of Personal Vision.	1
Begin with the End in Mind: Principles of Personal Leadership.	4
Put First Things First: Principles of Personal Management.	6
Think Win/Win: Principles of Interpersonal Leadership.	4
Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood.	3
Synergize Principles of Creative Communication	2
Sharpen the Saw: Principles of Balanced Self-Renewal.	5

Table 3: Practice

Habits of highly effective people	Rank
Be Proactive: Principles of Personal Vision.	2
Begin with the End in Mind: Principles of Personal Leadership	4
Put First Things First: Principles of Personal Management.	6
Think Win/Win: Principles of Interpersonal Leadership.	3
Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood.	1
Synergize Principles of Creative Communication	5
Sharpen the Saw: Principles of Balanced Self-Renewal.	3

Conclusion

The study concluded the following. One, based on Pearson correlation analysis there exists a correlation between the two variables "Importance" and "Practice" on question number four and six. Two, based on ranking weighted analysis there exists perception of significance ranking as related to the two variables "importance" and "practice" among the seven questions. For example, the participants ranked question one (Be Proactive: Principles of Personal Vision) the highest level of importance among the seven question, and how these principles are practiced, question five (Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood) was ranked as highest.

The limitation of this study points toward the small sample of only eighteen responses. It is recommended that for further study a larger sample should be employed.

References:

¹ Covey, S. R. (1990). *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. A Fireside Book, published by Simon & Schuster.

² Eidgahy, S. Y. (2002). *Academic Administration: Leadership vs. Management*. Proceedings of the 2002 American Society for Engineering Education Annual Conference and Exposition.

³ Hecht, I., Higgerson, M. L., Gmelch, W. H., and Turcker, A. (1999). The department chair as academic leader. Phoenix, AZ: The American Council on Education/Oryx Press.

⁴ Covey, S. R. (1992). Principle-Centered Leadership. A Fireside Book, published by Simon & Schuster.

⁵ Burns, J. M. (1978). Leadership, Harper & Row, New York, NY.

⁶ Bass, B. M. (1985). Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectation. The Free Press, New York, NY.

⁷ Senge, P. M. (1994). The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization. Currency/Doubleday, New York, NY.

⁸ Bass, B. M. (1981). Stodgill's Handbook of Leadership. The Free Press, New York, NY.

⁹ Bass, B. M. (1998). Transformational Leadership: Industrial, Military, and Educational Impact. Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ.

¹⁰ The National Academy for Academic Leadership. <http://www.thenationalacademy.org/Ready/barriers.html>. October 8, 2003.

Bibliography

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BOB LAHIDJI is the Department Head in the Industrial Technology Program at Eastern Michigan University. His primary interest and expertise are in the area of manufacturing process and CNC/CAM. Dr. Lahidji has been involved with manufacturing firms as a consultant in the area of improving manufacturing processes. He has written numerous articles and is the co-author of the textbook "Maximize SURFCAM".

Appendix 1

One of my colleagues, Dr. Eydgahi, the Vice President of Academic Affairs of Pine Technical College at Pine City, MN and I are writing a paper in the area of “Effective Leadership”, which we would like to present at the American Society of Engineering Education conference in June, 2004. The enclosed survey is part of this study. Please complete the very brief survey by rating the following seven habits of highly effective people, which were identified by Covey (2003) as common elements that characterize effective leadership. Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated. Please let me know if you would like to receive the results of this survey.

Notes:

- A. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and the confidentiality is guaranteed by the investigators.
- B. If you wish to receive and employ the results of this survey, please notify me in a separate email. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated! If you have any questions about any aspect of this study, you may email me at bob.lahidji@emich.edu.

The rating is weighted “5” as strong agreement with statement, and one as strong disagreement with statement. Please respond to the following on two levels:

1. As its importance in higher education administration; and
2. As its current practice in your current work environment.

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

Habits of highly effective people		1	2	3	4	5
1	Be Proactive: Principles of Personal Vision.					
2	Begin with the End in Mind: Principles of Personal leadership.					
3	Put First Things First: Principles of Personal Management.					
4	Think Win/Win: Principles of Interpersonal Leadership.					
5	Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood.					
6	Synergize Principles of Creative Communication.					
7	Sharpen the Saw: Principles of Balanced Self-Renewal.					

Please note that this project has been reviewed and approved by the EMU Faculty/Doctoral Human Subjects Review Committee. Any questions on the approval process should be directed to Dr. Pernecky or Dr. Melia, UHSRC Co-Chairs, at 487-0379.