THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXECUTIVE LEADER AT UNIVERSITY: A NARRATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT
The leadership is the leading and burning issue ans solely responsible for the success and failire of all the organizations including the higher education institutions. It is the leadership whose main role is the inspiration and motivation of students towards their curriculum and workforces for the attainment of institutional tasks and responsibilities effectively. The vice-chancellor is the sole academic and the administrative leader of the University. This study narrated the views of selective Vice Chancellors of KP, Pakistan regarding performing their responsibilities. A structured interview was coded into the responsibility theme and then conducted face to face interview from each leader at their respective universities. The data was the transcript, compared through the tables and interpreted in the form of conceptual map. The trustworthiness of the study was based on persistent observation, member checking, and debriefing. There were differences in their narrative views regarding their strengths and weakness, hiring eligibility, their point of difficulty of decision making, criticism faced by subordinates from person to person.

Keywords: Executive leader, University, Vice Chancellor, Responsibilities, Narrative.

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Introduction
This section provides an insight of the academic leadership in the context of education sector along with prime qualities and responsibilities of inspirations and motivation of workforces towards the achievement of desired objectives. This section also provides the main theories of leadership concerning their extra-role behavior in the academic institutions with the aim to improve credibility and success of the academic institutions at par to the international standards.

Role of executive in university
Along with the academic work of the University, there are three main functions of the University: teaching, research, and the community services. To attain the purpose of the University, now the strong concept of the executive control has been emerged. Senate, Syndicate, councils, and boards are supplements to the Vice-chancellors to give advice and make a framework to University structure. As universities are underfunded, so for income generation, the element of marketing is also important to earn through fee by offering market-oriented courses, a research grant from foreign donors, etc. Commercial and entrepreneurial spirit to attract students, particularly international students is the key element of the enterprise culture. Quality and accountability are expressed through the university-student relations, university-industry relations or university-government relations. Management control tools are soft-money budgets, commercial companies, institutes of research or teaching, fundraising, and marketing campaigns (Marginson & Considine, 2000). Ownership is also an emerging concept of devolution of power and responsibility to subordinates (HOD of each concerned departments).

Figure I Leader Qualities & Responsibilities

Source: www.personalitydevelopmenttip.com
"When you were made a leader, you weren't given a crown, you were given the responsibility to bring out the best in others" Jack Welch.

**Theories regarding responsible leader**

An executive leader should have competence and have power (Nohria, 2010). Broadbelt (2016) urges that effective leaders have to take responsible leadership decisions and do the right thing. The responsible leadership is acting with integrity in the moment of choice. Our organizations, our communities and our society all depend on the quality of those decisions. Maak and Pless discuss responsible leadership as an evolution from leader-subordinate relationship moving to leader-stakeholder relationship. This subtle but important differentiation significantly widens the scope and meaning of responsible leadership to encompass a more diverse group where relationships become the focus of leadership. Responsible leadership also means leading by example. Pless describes responsible leadership as a: “to achieve social change and acceptable values formation, relationship between leaders and stakeholders connected with purpose and have same ideas over which they help one another to higher levels of motivation and commitment” (Pless, 2007). Fernando (2016) says that basic factors in various leadership theories are leader, follower, situation, and outcomes. Here leaders have a primary responsibility to protect and develop the resources hand over to them by society.

Figure 2 Leadership: Whose Responsibility is it?

![Leadership Is Learned: Three Secrets of an Outstanding Leader](source: Pearson Education, 2014.)

**Current study**

This study narrates the responsibilities of selected Vice-chancellors of KP universities, Pakistan. According to KP Universities Act 2012, Vice Chancellor is the chief executive of the University responsible for all administrative and academic functions of University, conduct convocation, present
annual report, do action in case of emergency and have defined power. Their views were elicited, the transcript concluded, and suggestions are given at the end of the study. This study is novel in the sense that nobody interviewed the Vice Chancellor about their functions, responsibilities, problems, challenges, and styles.

**Objectives of the study**

Every study is always based on certain objectives to be achieved; the following are the main objectives of the study:

- To elicit the views about the responsibility of executive leaders of KP universities in narrative form.
- To compare the views regarding the responsibility of the executive leaders of KP universities in narrative form.
- To make recommendations for a better form of leadership that may be effective in the academic institutions.

**Research questions**

Following are the guiding questions to lead the study towards a conclusion by applying different procedures:

- How do the vice chancellors view their responsibility as an executive head?
- Do the vice chancellors differ in their narration on responding to executive problems and challenges?

**Research method**

The narrative research design was adopted to get a deeper insight into the knowledge in the form of parts, compared and get a meaningful understanding of the narratives of the subject.
Conceptual framework

Participants
Seven Vice Chancellors were interviewed after obtaining their willingness to participate in the study. For a case study in narrative form, sample size should be ≤10 interviews (Creswell, 1998) or ≥ 6 (Morse, 1994). In non-probability sampling, the critical case sampling technique was used.

Procedure
Seven VCs available among nineteen universities in KP region agreed to participate in study. The study was delimited to only KP universities of Pakistan. Structured interview questions were coded in the responsibility theme. As the narrative study is qualitative in nature, so for the trustworthiness of the study, prolonged engagement and persistent observation, debrief and member checking was the part of the study. After collecting data from participants, their narrative was transcribed and then interpreted through a conceptual map.

Findings and discussion
On the basis of objectives of study, a narrative view was quoted below on responsibility theme: Ideas or views of executive leaders are mentioned below one by one: “First you have to make them feel that they should own their institute, creative thinking will emerge within an organization. Keeping in view the rules and regulation, combined meetings, mutual discussion elicits great ideas. Integrity is my greatest strength. 'I am over-sympathetic' and it is considered my weak point. By mutual discussion and by practically proving them to be right, I try convince them. I help a new employee by giving experience of meetings and assign tasks. I hire any candidate by giving test and
Being a leader, it is difficult part to do justice to all. Written communication is comfier for me. Do justice all the time is a difficult decision to make. Criticism on me is due to being more sympathetic." (VCG)

"Creativity is part of our training within the organization in the form of our curriculum, debate and through research. The demand of the Industry and Government, through research of teachers and students and peers of other universities, great ideas emerge. Allah's kindness is my greatest strength. Being not conscious about the petty politics is my weak point. I follow democratic way with co-workers to accept ideas. I encourage them to articulate logical ideas. A new employee is helped to understand the culture by personal meeting and guidance. Besides qualification, way of conversation, get up, and his loyalty as team member is also important to hire someone. A leader must do the right things against the people expectations which could be challenging as well. Both oral and written communication, I feel comfortable with it. Punishing people is the most difficult decision for me. People criticize me and say, 'I am unkind to them,' when I do something which they are not expecting." (VCE)

"By creative thinking, the development can only be possible and it comes by listening carefully everyone, discussion with tolerance and being humble. New ideas are emerged by provide opportunity and give them confidence through discussion during meetings. My strength is that I give preference to my job other than my family and I prefer to be called a govt. servant and facilitator rather than an officer. My humbleness is my weak point. I try, not to impose my ideas. I listen to them first and then accept their ideas. Although a new employee is facilitated by HOD but being an elder, I also counsel the new employee. Character along with merit is my hiring criteria. Self-restriction and being exemplary is a difficult part of being a leader. I am comfier with written communication. Hiring employees is the most difficult for me. I don't show off therefore I am criticized by others." (VCK)

"Creative thinking emerges through temptation, consultation and guiding towards track. Great ideas come by giving direction and consultation. My strength is my hard work. My weak point is, I trust others immediately. By consultation, direction, and advice, I try to convince others. I advise to newcomers is to perform their duty sincerely and do the work in a state of proper readiness. Besides merit, the person must be smart, well behaved, intelligent and have good communication skills. No immediate response from subordinates is the most difficult part of being a leader. Verbal communication is more comfortable for me with subordinates. Appointment on merit is the most difficult decision for me to make."
When employees demand undue rights which I don't fulfill then employees criticize." (VCB)

"I involve all the stakeholders to think creatively to take collective decisions. To have good ideas, we always do work in a team. My strength is forgiving people and when people take advantage of it, it becomes my weakness. Through the meeting, I convince my co-workers. First, I advise to the newcomer, guide them about rules and regulations and tell him that benefits are given to all. Besides merit, my hiring criteria is based on good presentation and get up as well. Verbal communication is more comfortable for me. When I punish someone, it is the most difficult decision for me. Criticism on me is that I am lenient and patient." (VCI)

"Creative thinking is encouraged by giving them ownership and giving guidance. Combined meeting and consultation emerge great ideas. 'I love people' which become my strength but by trusting more becomes my weakness. I do not impose my ideas and I try to convince them. At least six months' time is given to newcomer to adjust and facilitate them after then he/she is accountable. To find their willingness is my hiring criteria. Developing trust between me and workers is the most difficult part of being a leader. I feel comfortable with both verbal and written communication; it depends on the nature of communication. Decisions regarding finances are the difficult one to make. I need a quick response, immediately and I am criticized on it." (VCW)

"Creative thinking is emerged by observation, thinking and then with mutual discussion. I follow scientific approach. From students, team leaders, from me and even by visiting to other institutions, great ideas come in mind. Truthfulness and straightforwardness are my greatest strength. Anger and toughness are my greatest weaknesses. Through persuasion, I convince others to accept my ideas. The culture of the organization is well understood by new employee through on job training. To see Institutional background is my hiring criteria. Implementation of decision uniformly across the board is a difficult part of being a leader. Verbal communication for speedy /rapid action is more preferred. Firing someone is the most difficult decision. On my financial reform agenda, I am criticized." (VCP).

Based on their narrative view, the table is made to compare their views. (See Annexure A)

Table 1 Comparison of Narrative Views
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>VCG</th>
<th>VCE</th>
<th>VCK</th>
<th>VCB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative thinking</td>
<td>By owning institute</td>
<td>Curriculum, research, debate, and training</td>
<td>Listen and discuss</td>
<td>Temptation and Consultancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great ideas</td>
<td>Meeting, mutual discussion</td>
<td>Research, peers, demand of Government and Industry</td>
<td>Meeting and discussion</td>
<td>Direction and consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Allah's kindness</td>
<td>Priority to job</td>
<td>Hard-work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weakness</td>
<td>Over-sympathetic</td>
<td>Ignore petty politics.</td>
<td>humbleness</td>
<td>Trust others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convincing others</td>
<td>Discussion and practically proving them</td>
<td>Follow the democratic way</td>
<td>Don't impose my ideas</td>
<td>Consultancy, direction, and advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help in adjustment</td>
<td>Exposure of meeting and giving assignment</td>
<td>By personal meeting and guidance</td>
<td>HOD is concerned counsel him</td>
<td>Advise them to be sincere, work in order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring</td>
<td>Test and assignment</td>
<td>With the qualification, way of speak, dress, and good team member</td>
<td>Character beside merit</td>
<td>Must be smart, well behaved, intelligent and have good delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult part of the leadership</td>
<td>Do justice to all</td>
<td>Do the right things against the expectation of people</td>
<td>Self-restriction</td>
<td>No immediate response by co-workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Written</td>
<td>Verbal + Written</td>
<td>Written</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult decision</td>
<td>Justice all the time</td>
<td>Punish anyone</td>
<td>Hiring</td>
<td>Appointment on merit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism</td>
<td>Being sympathetic</td>
<td>Do against expectations and</td>
<td>Don't pomp and show</td>
<td>When they demand undue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1a Comparison of Narrative Views (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>VCI</th>
<th>VCW</th>
<th>VCP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative thinking</td>
<td>Taking collective decision</td>
<td>By giving ownership and guidance</td>
<td>By observation, thinking and then with mutual discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great ideas</td>
<td>work in a team</td>
<td>Combined meeting and consultation</td>
<td>From students, from colleagues, and by visiting other institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>'I love people'</td>
<td>Truthfulness and straightforwardness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weakness</td>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>I trust more</td>
<td>Anger and toughness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convincing others</td>
<td>In meeting to accept my ideas</td>
<td>Convince them but not impose anything</td>
<td>Through persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help in adjustment</td>
<td>By advice and understand their rules and regulations.</td>
<td>Give time to adjust (6 months) and facilitate them.</td>
<td>Through on job training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring</td>
<td>Presentation and get up beside merit</td>
<td>Find their willingness</td>
<td>To see Institutional background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult part of the leadership</td>
<td>I listen to everybody</td>
<td>Building trust among all</td>
<td>Implementation of decision uniformly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td>Verbal and written</td>
<td>verbal communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult decision</td>
<td>When I punish someone</td>
<td>Financial decisions</td>
<td>Firing someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism</td>
<td>Being lenient and patient</td>
<td>On quick response</td>
<td>My financial reform agenda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4 Interpretation of Views through Conceptual Map
The above conceptual map shows differences in their narrative views regarding carrying out their responsibilities. All leaders feel comfortable with oral communication except VCG and VCK. All the leaders have their own strong and weak points to deal with their employees. According to Karanen (2015), interaction and communication nature of the responsible leaders not only depend on the qualities or competences of individual leaders but also on narrative environment of organization. In an article by Shamir and Eilam (2005), it is suggested that life-story is key element to depict the self-knowledge, self-concept clarity and person-role in the development of authentic leaders. Lynham and Chermack (2006) developed theoretical framework and discussed the inadequacy and focuses on leadership responsibility to both people & performance. A multi-method study published by Hoogh and Hartog (2008) in which it is suggested that ethical leadership is more concerned to efficiency of top management team and subordinates’ own place within it and their optimism about future of the organization. Fond (2010) analyzed that the managers are not homogeneous, managers construct multiple, competing and ambiguous narratives of selves. The difference in narratives is due to the difference in the situation they are performing and culturally shaped narrative conventions. Dahlvig (2013) study revealed that cultural challenges exist for female leaders. Their institutes create inclusive environments for female leaders. Fernando (2016) concluded that leaders have an integral responsibility to protect and develop the resources entrusted to them by society. There is a demand for a
new leadership approach that is more responsible and inclusive. Research conducted by Deem et al. (2003) at Lancaster University was categorized into three phases: The phase one comprised of focus group discussion, phase two involved interviews about backgrounds, practices and their perceptions and phase 3 comprises of case studies. Morley (2012) studied feminist knowledge, analyzed women's leadership aspirations and absences. There is a misrecognition of females' leadership capabilities. Forster (2000) investigated the views of women about their career, opportunities and their work and domestic life conflict in the UK. They either put their careers on hold or resign themselves to never achieving senior positions. Priola (2007) explored that tension is created due to predominance of masculine practices and values which is also associated with downplaying women's success. Spendalone (2007) found that most universities have no systematic approach to identifying or developing leadership skills.

In the light of above articles, it is revealed that leaders perform according to the situation prevailed to them and situation varies and there are cultural challenges/constraints for female leaders especially, as they are compelled to resign the job. Development of new theory is also demanded to have better performance and a new leader emerges which should be more effective responsible and broad. There is no scientific approach to developing authentic leadership.

**Conclusions**

In the light of finding and above discussion, there are the concluding points as emerged from the results by comparing the views:

- There is a difference is the strong and weak points as it varies from person to person and the situation prevailed to them.
- Most leaders believe in mutual discussion and meeting for eliciting creative ideas and solving the raised conflict.
- Most leaders are more comfortable with oral/verbal communication for rapid response.
- There is a difference in priority regarding hiring someone for their institution.
- There is a difference in point of difficulty of decision making and criticism they face in their work from subordinates.

**Recommendations**

There are the following recommendations:

- Mutual discussion and meetings play a vital role to emerge new ideas, creativity, create mutual harmony and conducive environment at the workplace.
• Culturally restrictions are there for female leaders specially and for adapting any change but leader persuasion can play a magical role to implement dynamic strategies.
• While performing the responsibility, situational leadership theory is better to be implemented in the form of selling and participating.
• Ownership is the emerging concept to build and inculcate the self-confidence, competitive environment and creativity among managers of various fields which lessens the responsibility on executive leaders for outside orientation and Global mindset.
• There may be a proper mechanism or scientific approach to explore the talents and develop the leadership qualities.

References


