

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SCENARIO: VISIONARY INSIGHTS

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Abstract: *Academic leadership is essential for the success and growth of higher education in India, particularly in the context of NEP, 2020. Academic leadership is the process of leading an educational institution towards achieving its goals and objectives. It involves creating a vision, setting goals, and providing guidance and support to the faculty and staff. In the Indian context, academic leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the future of the education system. It requires a sustained effort from policymakers, educators, and researchers to address these challenges and create an environment that fosters growth and innovation in the higher education sector. It is in this context, author made an attempt to present some visionary insights and suggest a model framework for the academic leadership and its strategies in Indian HE scenario.*

Keywords: *NEP, 2020, Academic leadership, visionary insights, academic excellence.*

INTRODUCTION

Academic leadership is a broad and complex field, and there is a vast body of research literature that explores various aspects of it. There is no universal definition of academic leadership, and it can encompass a wide range of roles and responsibilities. However, many scholars agree that academic leaders are responsible for creating and maintaining a positive academic environment, promoting excellence in teaching and research, and ensuring the success of their institution. Effective academic leaders often possess a combination of personal qualities, such as integrity, vision, courage, and adaptability, as well as professional competencies, such as communication, strategic planning, decision-making, and team-building. They are also skilled at managing change and creating a culture of continuous improvement. Academic leaders face a range of challenges, including managing competing priorities, navigating political and economic pressures, addressing diversity and inclusion issues, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. However, they also have the opportunity to make a significant impact on their institution and the broader academic community. There are many different leadership styles and approaches that can be effective in an academic setting, including transformational, transactional, servant, authentic, and distributed leadership. The most effective style will depend on the context and the specific needs of the institution. Academic leaders play a crucial role in promoting innovation and change in their institution. This may involve creating a culture of innovation, developing partnerships with industry and other institutions, and supporting interdisciplinary research and collaboration (Bush, 2003).

There are several factors that contribute to the slower growth of Indian universities in terms of quality of educational products and their ranking when compared to global universities. Some of these factors include: i) Indian universities receive limited funding compared to their global counterparts, which limits their ability to invest in research, infrastructure, and technology; ii) often criticized for their outdated curriculum, which does not adequately prepare students for the

current job market. There is a need for universities to update their course offerings and incorporate more modern and relevant subjects; iii) face a shortage of qualified and experienced faculty members, which impacts the quality of education and research; iv) lag behind in terms of research output compared to global universities. This can be attributed to the lack of funding, infrastructure, and expertise; v) often lack modern infrastructure, such as advanced laboratories and equipment, which hinders their ability to conduct cutting-edge research; and vi) not as well-connected to global research networks as their counterparts in other countries. This limits their ability to collaborate with researchers and institutions around the world, which can stifle innovation and progress. Thus, addressing these issues will be critical for Indian universities to grow and compete on par with global universities. It will require a sustained effort from policymakers, educators, and researchers to address these challenges and create an environment that fosters growth and innovation in the higher education sector.

Importance of Academic Leadership in Higher Education

Academic leadership is essential for the success and growth of higher education in India. Here are some of the reasons why academic leadership is important in Indian higher education (Miller & Miller, 2001):

- **Setting strategic direction:** Academic leaders play a critical role in setting the strategic direction of higher education institutions. They develop and articulate a vision for the institution and ensure that all stakeholders are aligned with it.
- **Promoting academic excellence:** Academic leaders ensure that the institution maintains a high standard of academic excellence. They oversee the development and implementation of academic programs and ensure that they are rigorous and relevant.
- **Fostering research and innovation:** Academic leaders encourage and support research and innovation in higher education institutions. They promote a culture of inquiry and intellectual curiosity among faculty and students.
- **Enhancing student experience:** Academic leaders focus on enhancing the overall student experience in higher education institutions. They ensure that students have access to high-quality resources and facilities and are supported in their academic and personal development.
- **Strengthening institutional reputation:** Academic leaders play a key role in building and maintaining the institutional reputation of higher education institutions. They ensure that the institution is recognized for its academic excellence, research output, and community engagement.
- **Ensuring financial sustainability:** Academic leaders are responsible for ensuring the financial sustainability of higher education institutions. They develop and implement sound financial management strategies that ensure the institution's long-term viability.

Thus, academic leadership is crucial for the success and growth of higher education in India. Effective academic leaders play a critical role in setting strategic direction, promoting academic excellence, fostering research and innovation, enhancing student experience, strengthening institutional reputation, and ensuring financial sustainability.

Aim of the paper

The main aim of this paper is to appraise the role of academic leadership in India higher education and more particularly, in the context of National Education Policy, 2020;

- To understand the Government of India initiatives on academic leadership in higher education and the challenges that need to be addressed by the academic leaders in India in the context of NEP, 2020;
- To study the role of women, technology and academic leaders in making Indian Universities at par with global standards; and
- To suggest a model framework for the academic leadership and its strategies in Indian higher education scenario.

Government of India Initiatives on Academic Leadership in Higher Education

The Indian government recognizes the critical role of academic leadership in higher education and has taken several initiatives to strengthen it. The Ministry of Education (formerly known as the Ministry of Human Resource Development) has emphasized the importance of developing a culture of academic excellence in the country's higher education system. One of the key initiatives of the government is the establishment of the Higher Education Leadership Development Programme (HELDP). The programme is designed to enhance the leadership skills of senior and middle-level academic administrators in higher education institutions. It aims to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to lead their institutions effectively.

The government has also launched several other initiatives to promote academic leadership in higher education. For example, the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) provides funding for the establishment of new institutions, infrastructure development, and capacity building of faculty and academic administrators. The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) has been introduced to evaluate institutions based on several parameters, including teaching, learning, and research, to promote competition and encourage excellence. The government has also emphasized the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning in higher education institutions. The Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNMTT) was launched to improve the quality of teaching in higher education by enhancing the skills and competencies of faculty members. Thus, the Indian government recognizes the importance of academic leadership in higher education and has taken several initiatives to promote it. These initiatives aim to develop a culture of academic excellence in the country's higher education system and ensure that it meets the needs of the 21st century"

Who is Academic Leader?

Academic Leaders are those, who create, innovate and motivate academics in universities. Academic leadership also referred to as teaching leadership or intellectual leadership and building leadership. Academic leaders play an important and effective role in developing students' learning skills and knowledge they need in their future careers and provide challenging opportunities to aspire their goals. It is suggested by the Hersey and Blanchard that an effective academic leaders use the four styles, which includes "Telling, Selling, Participating and Delegating". Effective Leadership depends on how they communicate and create a conducive environment. The core aim and function of the Academic leaders is to provide and promote with the best Teaching, Learning and Research activities in higher education. They play multiple roles for the development of institution and for betterment of students learning experiences. They play the role of manager and focus on multiple task tasks, functions, and building learning behaviors.

To be an academic leader, the leader must have a broad vision of their field, and who has the power to build the mission, achieve objectives and to bring change in their field through best practices leading to respectable accreditation. Academic leaders should have the ability and capacity to work with collaboration and networking industry-institutions for quality higher education, expands the wings of institution by promoting MOU's and best internship facilities to students. He/ She should be able release and engage human potential in the pursuit of common goals. The vision of the academic leader must focus on inclusive growth, with the object of transparency which leads to good governance, accountability and transparency. Academic leaders must see the teaching–learning process in a more innovative way. They must foster the technology which can create a culture of innovation that encourages experimentation and creativity in the use of technology. This can lead to new approaches to teaching-learning processes that must suit the needs of students in a rapidly changing world. Thus, a model academic leader can create an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and service, and ensures that the institution is well-positioned for success in a rapidly changing world of higher learning.

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Institutional development (ID) is the process of improving the effectiveness of an institution. It involves assessing the institution's strengths and weaknesses, identifying areas for improvement, and implementing strategies to address these areas. In the Indian context, institutional development is critical for promoting and enhancing the quality of education in higher education and ensuring the sustainability of educational institutions. It is an equally crucial components of the education system in India. The Indian education system is one of the largest in the world, with more than 1.8 million schools and 45,000 higher education institutions. However, despite the large number of educational institutions, there are significant challenges that need to be addressed in terms of academic leadership and institutional development (Rehbock,2020). In this article, we will discuss academic leadership and institutional development in the Indian scenario. Academic leadership is the process of leading an educational institution towards its goals and objectives. It involves creating a vision, setting goals, and providing guidance and support to the faculty and staff. In the Indian context, academic leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the future of the education system.

The **challenges** that need to be addressed in academic leadership in India:

- **Lack of Focus on Innovation:** One of the main challenges in academic leadership in India is the lack of focus on innovation. Most educational institutions in India follow a traditional approach to education and are resistant to change. As a result, there is a lack of innovation in teaching methods, curriculum development, and research.
- **Lack of Accountability:** Another major challenge in academic leadership is the lack of accountability. Many educational institutions in India lack proper governance and accountability systems, which leads to inefficiency and corruption.
- **Limited Resources:** The Indian education system faces a shortage of resources, including funding, infrastructure, and trained faculty. This limits the ability of academic leaders to implement effective strategies and programs.
- **Emphasis on Grades:** The Indian education system places a strong emphasis on grades and test scores, which leads to a focus on rote learning and memorization. This can be a significant barrier to creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

- **Fragmentation:** The Indian education system is highly fragmented, with many small and medium-sized educational institutions. This fragmentation makes it difficult to implement effective institutional development strategies.
- **Lack of Collaboration:** There is a lack of collaboration between educational institutions in India, which limits the sharing of best practices and resources.
- **Resistance to Change:** Educational institutions in India are often resistant to change, which makes it difficult to implement organizational development strategies.

To address these challenges, academic leaders in India need to focus on the following key areas:

- **Innovation:** Academic leaders should encourage innovation in teaching methods, curriculum development, and research. This can be achieved by providing incentives for faculty members to engage in research and innovation, and by establishing partnerships with industry and other academic institutions.
- **Accountability:** Academic leaders should establish clear governance and accountability systems that promote transparency and integrity. This can be achieved by establishing independent oversight bodies, such as ombudsmen or auditors, and by promoting a culture of ethical conduct.
- **Resource Mobilization:** Academic leaders should focus on resource mobilization, including funding, infrastructure, and trained faculty. This can be achieved by establishing partnerships with philanthropic organizations, industry, and other academic institutions.
- **Emphasis on Skills:** Academic leaders should shift the focus from grades to skills development. This can be achieved by promoting active learning, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills in the curriculum.

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF NEP, 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a landmark reform in the Indian education system, which aims to transform the education system to meet the needs of the 21st century. The NEP 2020 emphasizes the role of academic leadership in shaping the future of higher education in India. In this article, we will discuss the emerging role of academic leadership in Indian universities in the context of NEP 2020. The NEP 2020 highlights the need for academic leaders to play a key role in the transformation of Indian universities. Here are some of the key areas where academic leadership can make a significant impact:

- **Curriculum Design:** The NEP 2020 emphasizes the need for a flexible and interdisciplinary curriculum that promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Academic leaders can play a key role in designing and implementing such a curriculum that meets the needs of the 21st century.
- **Pedagogical Practices:** The NEP 2020 emphasizes the need for pedagogical practices that promote active and experiential learning. Academic leaders can play a key role in promoting such practices by providing training to faculty members and encouraging the use of innovative teaching methods.
- **Research and Innovation:** The NEP 2020 emphasizes the need for research and innovation to drive the development of higher education in India. Academic leaders can play a key role in promoting research and innovation by providing incentives for faculty members to engage in research and innovation, and by establishing partnerships with industry and other academic institutions.

- **Internationalization:** The NEP 2020 emphasizes the need for internationalization of higher education in India. Academic leaders can play a key role in promoting internationalization by establishing partnerships with international universities, promoting student and faculty exchanges, and offering international courses and programs.
- **Governance and Administration:** The NEP 2020 emphasizes the need for effective governance and administration in higher education institutions. Academic leaders can play a key role in promoting transparency, accountability, and efficiency in governance and administration by establishing clear governance and accountability systems and promoting a culture of ethical conduct.

To effectively implement the NEP 2020, academic leaders in Indian universities need to focus on the following key areas:

- **Vision and Strategy:** Academic leaders have to establish a clear vision and strategy for the transformation of their universities in line with the NEP 2020. This can be achieved by engaging with stakeholders, including faculty members, students, industry, and government, and by conducting a comprehensive analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the institution.
- **Capacity Building:** Academic leaders need to focus on capacity building by providing training and support to faculty members, administrators, and staff members to implement the NEP 2020 effectively. This can be achieved by providing training programs, workshops, and other forms of professional development.
- **Collaboration:** Academic leaders need to establish collaborations with other institutions, industry, and government to implement the NEP 2020 effectively. This can be achieved by establishing partnerships, networks, and consortia to share best practices, resources, and expertise.
- **Innovation:** Academic leaders need to promote innovation in teaching, research, and administration to implement the NEP 2020 effectively. This can be achieved by providing incentives for innovation, establishing innovation centers, and promoting a culture of innovation.

Academic Leaders in making Indian Universities at par with Global Standards

Academic leaders play a crucial role in making Indian universities at par with global standards. Here are some ways academic leaders can contribute to this effort:

- **Vision and Strategy:** Academic leaders can set a clear vision and strategy for their institution, which should align with global standards. This strategy should include goals for research, teaching, and learning, and should be grounded in the latest trends and best practices in higher education.
- **Faculty Development:** The quality of teaching and research is essential to the success of any university. Academic leaders should invest in their faculty members by providing training and development opportunities. They should encourage faculty members to participate in conferences and workshops, collaborate with other institutions, and engage in research projects that can enhance their knowledge and skills.
- **Infrastructure:** Infrastructure plays a critical role in creating an environment that is conducive to learning and research. Academic leaders should invest in the infrastructure

of their institution, including laboratories, libraries, and other facilities. This will help attract and retain the best students and faculty members.

- **International Collaboration:** Collaboration with international universities can expose students and faculty members to different cultures and academic perspectives, and can help build strong research partnerships. Academic leaders should actively seek out partnerships with institutions in other countries.
- **Innovation:** Innovation is key to staying competitive in today's rapidly changing world. Academic leaders should encourage innovation and entrepreneurship among their students and faculty members. They should also establish incubators and innovation centers to support the development of new ideas and technologies.
- **Accreditation:** Accreditation from recognized organizations is important for ensuring that an institution meets global standards. Academic leaders should work towards obtaining accreditation from international organizations to ensure that their institution is recognized globally.

Women in Academic Leadership

The representation of women in academic leadership positions has been historically low, despite the increasing number of women in higher education. Academic leadership positions, such as department chairs, deans, and provosts, are often filled by men, which can result in a lack of diversity and representation in decision-making processes. However, there have been significant efforts to increase the representation of women in academic leadership positions in recent years. There are several factors that have contributed to the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership positions, including gender bias, lack of mentorship and support, and systemic barriers. To address these issues, universities and academic institutions have implemented various initiatives to support and promote women in leadership positions. These initiatives include mentorship programs, leadership training, and the creation of diversity and inclusion committees. The benefits of increasing the representation of women in academic leadership positions are numerous. Additionally, having more diverse perspectives in leadership positions can lead to more inclusive and equitable policies and practices within institutions. Despite the progress that has been made, there is still work to be done to increase the representation of women in academic leadership positions. This includes addressing unconscious bias, ensuring equitable access to leadership positions, and providing support and mentorship to women who aspire to leadership roles. Hence, it is useful in increasing the representation of women in academic leadership positions is crucial for creating more diverse and inclusive academic institutions. By addressing the systemic barriers that prevent women from reaching leadership positions and providing support and mentorship to aspiring female leaders, academic institutions can create a more equitable and inclusive environment for all.

Technology and Academic Leadership

The role of technology and academic leadership is critical in shaping the future of education. Technology has revolutionized the way we access and share information, and academic leaders have the responsibility to leverage these advancements to enhance the learning experience of students. Here are some of the ways in which technology and academic leadership can work together:

- **Incorporating technology in the curriculum:** Academic leaders can work with faculty members to integrate technology into the curriculum. This can include online resources,

multimedia materials, and interactive tools that make learning more engaging and accessible.

- **Promoting digital literacy:** Academic leaders can play a key role in promoting digital literacy among students and faculty. This includes training on how to use digital tools effectively and responsibly, as well as encouraging the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- **Developing online learning programs:** With the increasing demand for online learning, academic leaders can develop high-quality online programs that provide flexible and accessible education to students. This requires a deep understanding of the technology and the pedagogical strategies needed to ensure effective learning outcomes.
- **Investing in infrastructure:** Academic leaders can allocate resources to improve technology infrastructure, including Wi-Fi, computers, and other digital tools. This ensures that students and faculty have access to the resources they need to succeed.
- **Fostering innovation:** Academic leaders can create a culture of innovation that encourages experimentation and creativity in the use of technology. This can lead to new approaches to teaching and learning that better meet the needs of students in a rapidly changing world.

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES IN IHE SCENARIO

Academic leadership in higher education involves developing and implementing strategies that promote academic excellence, student success, and institutional growth. Here are some leadership strategies that can be effective in the higher education scenario:

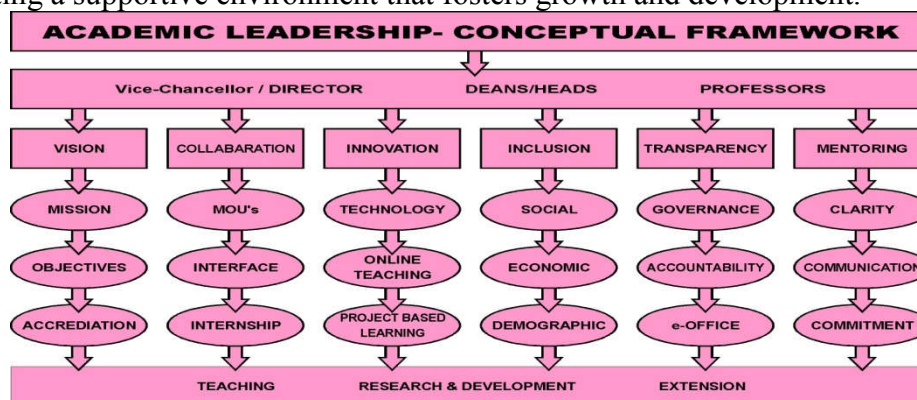
- **Fostering a culture of collaboration:** Academic leaders need to create an environment where faculty, staff, and students can work together to achieve common goals. This can be done by encouraging interdisciplinary research, promoting cross-departmental initiatives, and supporting shared governance.
- **Investing in professional development:** Academic leaders should prioritize the professional development of faculty and staff, providing opportunities for training, mentorship, and career advancement. This helps to retain top talent and ensures that the institution stays competitive.
- **Embracing diversity and inclusion:** Academic leaders need to ensure that the institution promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of its operations. This includes recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty and student body, fostering a welcoming campus climate, and promoting cultural competence.
- **Prioritizing student success:** Academic leaders should put student success at the forefront of their strategies. This means providing a supportive learning environment, offering high-quality academic programs, and promoting experiential learning opportunities.
- **Embracing technology and innovation:** Academic leaders need to stay abreast of technological advancements and embrace innovation to enhance teaching and learning, research, and administrative operations. This includes leveraging technology to improve student engagement, offering online learning options, and investing in research infrastructure.
- **Strategic planning and resource allocation:** Academic leaders should develop a strategic plan that outlines the institution's goals, priorities, and resource allocation

strategies. This helps to ensure that the institution is focused on achieving its mission and has the necessary resources to succeed.

A Model Framework of Academic Leadership

A model academic leadership involves a leader who is committed to creating an inclusive and collaborative environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and service. Here are some key characteristics and also a proposed model for effective academic leadership:

- **Visionary:** A model academic leader has a clear vision for the institution and a strategic plan to achieve it. This includes identifying the institution's strengths and weaknesses, setting goals, and implementing initiatives that align with the institution's mission.
- **Collaborative:** A model academic leader fosters collaboration among faculty, staff, students, and external partners. This includes creating opportunities for interdisciplinary research, encouraging faculty to work together on grant proposals and publications, and promoting collaboration with industry and community partners.
- **Innovative:** A model academic leader encourages innovation and creativity in teaching, research, and service. This includes promoting the use of technology to enhance learning, supporting interdisciplinary research and collaborations, and providing resources for faculty to pursue innovative teaching and research methods.
- **Inclusive:** A model academic leader is committed to creating an inclusive environment that values diversity and equity. This includes recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty, staff, and student body, providing resources and support for underrepresented groups, and addressing issues of bias and discrimination.
- **Transparent:** A model academic leader is transparent in decision-making processes and communicates openly with stakeholders. This includes involving faculty, staff, and students in decision-making processes, providing regular updates on institutional goals and initiatives, and seeking feedback from stakeholders.
- **Mentorship:** A model academic leader is committed to mentoring and supporting faculty, staff, and students. This includes providing opportunities for professional development, recognizing and rewarding excellence in teaching and research, and creating a supportive environment that fosters growth and development.



Source: Developed by the Author

By embodying these characteristics, a model academic leader can create an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and service, and ensures that the institution is well-positioned for success in a rapidly changing world.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the literature on academic leadership emphasizes the importance of developing effective leaders who can navigate the complex and rapidly changing landscape of higher education in India. It also highlights the need for ongoing research and professional development to support the ongoing growth and success of academic leaders. The NEP 2020 provides an opportunity for academic leaders in Indian universities to transform the new education system to meet the prospective needs of education system of the 21st century. Academic leaders need to focus on curriculum design, pedagogical practices, research and innovation, internationalization, governance, and administration, and implement strategies to address these areas effectively. By doing so, academic leaders can ensure that Indian universities remain competitive and relevant in the global knowledge economy. It is also examined the necessary steps by which, the academic leaders can help to grow Indian universities at par with global standards and create a vibrant and dynamic academic environment that fosters innovation, research, and learning. Thus, effective academic leadership requires a combination of strong communication skills, vision, strategic thinking, and a commitment to excellence in all aspects of the institution's operations. Finally, technology and academic leadership can work together to create a more engaging, accessible, and effective educational experience for students. By leveraging the power of technology and promoting a culture of innovation, academic leaders can prepare students for success in the digital age.

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