

Chapter 4

Understanding of Leadership in Distance Education Management

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ABSTRACT

Today, distance education institutions are different from other traditional organizational structures because they require a virtual structuring. Therefore, the concept and practice of educational leadership is considered as a special area in distance education management process. As a requirement of 21st century, distance education leadership has been seen as a matter or necessity to be developed and to be investigated in the management of distance education. In this chapter, it is aimed to bring the insights of various researchers to define characteristics or qualifications of leadership in distance education, which are or should be different from traditional educational leadership through a literature review relevant to leadership and theories in leadership, educational leadership, and distance education leadership.

INTRODUCTION

Distance education has been developed in parallel to the traditional education (Keegan, 1986) created with the help of bidirectional communication between instructor and learner in order to facilitate the educational process with technology (Simonson & Schlosser, 2006). In the 1970s, the

technology started to have an impact on people's lives and the idea of how we use technology in education began to develop (Stolurow, 1968). Correspondence which is the first communication medium of distance education is done in the form of instructions by mail. Then communication technologies such as radio, TV broadcasts has created a new form of distance education. In the

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1980s, when the computers involved in human life, distance education has gained a new direction (Moore & Kearsley, 2005). Today, this virtual educational structuring (distance education) creating by computers and electronic technology, especially when associated with the Internet technology, is seen as a challenge to traditional education and the globalized world.

Research on distance education has often on issues that concern the implementation stage of teaching in distance education such as distance education systems, theories (Zawacki-Richter, Bächer & Vogt, 2009), pedagogical design (Hsu, Ho, Tsai, Hwang, Chu, Wang & Chen, 2012) as well as it should be focused on issues that can be integrated into this structure such as the structure of distance education institutions, distance education management, distance education leadership, leadership styles (Beaudoin, 2003; Gürol & Turhan, 2005; Zawacki-Richter, 2009; Barnes, 2011). For example, a significant relationship has determined between transformational leadership style and organizational characteristics of distance education institutions (Schrenk, 2011). In another study a significant relationship was found between servant leadership behaviors and organizational commitment and job satisfaction of teaching staff in distance education (Barnes 2011). As is seen from research on distance education leadership has mostly about leadership styles.

Otherwise as emphasized by Blount (2012), leadership styles which are proposed for leading employees in distance education have lost its importance, people should made studies aimed at solving organizational problems. Besides, Beaudoin (2003) draws an attention to the importance of the role and impact of leadership regarding the regulations of distance education.

In this chapter, the characteristics and qualifications for distance education leadership have introduced which are different from traditional educational leadership. For this purpose, primarily theories of leadership and leadership in education are reviewed in literature, and then the

most emphasized distance education leadership qualifications are examined. These qualifications are discussed in terms of distance education leadership that is seen as a special area of distance education management.

LEADERSHIP

Although leadership is seen as one of the important reasons for success or failure in organizations, it is clearly understood that success cannot be limited to leader's behavior or performance (Halpin, 1956; Bass & Avolio, 1995). Leadership is not only seen as activities of guidance for a group of people or an organization, but also should be characteristics such as developing vision, networking people in order to bring together around a vision, planning and organizing (Enck, 2002). Leaders cannot limited to only these expectations. People are expecting of many characteristics from a leader such as being the initiator (Çelik, 2007), charismatic (Collin & Porras, 1994), gifted (Maccoby, 2000), motivator (Gibb, 1967; Pahal, 1999), visionary (Covey, 1990), problem solver (Mackenzie, 1949), meeting the requirements (Erdoğan, 1991) and etc. These expectations put the pressure on the leaders and sometimes it can be as cruel as not giving the opportunity to breathe (Cunningham, 1976).

Leadership involves connecting people and directing them towards a particular goal or outcome (Avolio & Kahai, 2003). As defined by Erdal (2007), leadership is the process of social influence providing the willing of participation of the followers in order to achieve objectives of the organization. Koçel (2007) defined that leader is the person who makes innovation and regulations and gives vision that is necessary to comply with the changes. Ultimately, presence of a group of people and common purpose are required to talk about leadership and also leader of this group must voluntarily take leadership and must have knowledge, abilities and specific personal characteristics (Bolat & Seymen, 2003).

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