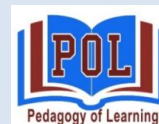


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Servant Leadership: A Philosophy to prepare Humane Teacher for Holistic Development of Learners

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Abstract: He who knows how to serve knows how to rule. Servant leadership is a philosophy that emphasizes service first and teaching being the profession of service has enormous importance particularly in terms of servant leadership though research studies show that it is not implemented at large scale in the field of teaching-learning. The present study is a reflection of the experiences of the teacher who is a researcher too and who tries to implement the principles of servant leadership in the teacher education programme. The present study is conducted with the following objectives: i) To examine the teaching-learning process from the perspective of servant leadership. ii) To study the classroom environment where the philosophy of servant leadership is implemented. iii) To study the influence of servant leadership to make the teachers more humane for the holistic development of the learners. A case study has been followed for the present research. The data has been analyzed qualitatively. The study has found out that: the teacher is a servant leader as she has different characteristics of servant leaders like- listening, empathy, healing, persuasion, building community, and growth of the community as proposed by Greenleaf (1977). The students enjoy a free, conducive, anxiety-free, amicable environment in the classroom where servant leadership is implemented. Servant leadership helps both the teacher and the students to grow towards becoming good humane teachers by enhancing humane qualities like empathy, fellow feelings, cooperation, accountability, etc. So, the study recommends to implement the philosophy of servant leadership while preparing teachers so that they grow more humane and bring out the true essence of service that will definitely inspire the learners to develop values that lead to their holistic development.

Keywords: Servant leadership, humane teacher, classroom environment, holistic development of teachers and learners

Introduction

Now a days value crisis has become a global phenomenon (Sharma, 2014). The adolescent learners and youths are suffering from value degradation and deterioration of human values (Bhakta & Dutta, 2017; Gupta, 2016; Khedikar, 2013). The violation of human rights, women, and child abuse are because of the loss of moral and ethical values (Gupta, 2016) and value degradation (degradations of social, moral, ethical, spiritual values) is not only found in social level but also in national level (Sharma, 2014). The factors like- influence of nuclear family and materialistic way of life, breakdown of parental control of children in families, influence of peer group, gender bias, attraction of change or modernization,

influence of mass media, lack of learning positive atmosphere in school, lack of co-curriculum activities based on moral values, dirty politics, higher importance to materialistic achievement among school students, lack of academic syllabus related to human values are also crucial factors responsible for value degradation (Boruah, 2017). Aside from that, a lack of a healthy learning environment and extracurricular activities related to human values were key factors in the decline of human values. (Gupta, 2016). So, in the National Education Policy (2020) the focus is on the holistic development of the learners. It said-“The aim of education will not only be cognitive development but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key 21st-century skills” (P 12). The whole process of education should be planned and reformed in such a way that it helps to manifest the potentialities and perfections that is already there in individuals. “The school curriculum will include, early on, the material on human values such as respect for all persons, empathy, tolerance, human rights, gender equality, non-violence, global citizenship, inclusion, and equity”(P 28). Doraiswamy (2013) instigates to create a healthy environment in classroom where teachers will provoke to manifest the inner potentials of the students by their empathetic care. But only integration of values in the curriculum for holistic development is not enough. The teachers should manifest the abstract qualities and values as the learners follow the teachers. Teachers play the most significant role in the journey from human being to being humane. So, the teachers first should be humane. Dahiya (2022) remarks that the responsibility of future lies in the hands of teachers. And the humanistic development among teachers can contribute to a sustainable relationship among teachers and learners. The humane qualities of teachers will reshape the personality of students and will lead them towards the idealistic directions in their life (Sumathi, 2019).

From the very ancient times, teachers (gurus) have been playing the role of leader as they lead their disciples from ignorance to knowledge, from darkness to enlightenment, and from mortality to immortality. Though in modern times there is an overseas change in the role of the teacher as we traveled a far from the concept of teacher as a guru to teacher as a facilitator, the basic duties and responsibilities remain the same i.e. to draw out the best of the learner and to manifest their potentialities. A teacher is a leader in this respect. Servant leadership combines the elements of being a leader and having servant qualities. It is a philosophy and a set of practices that enrich the lives of individuals, build better organizations and ultimately create a more just and caring world. According to Robert K. Greenleaf who coined the term “servant leadership” opined “the servant leader is servant first....It begins with the natural feelings that one wants to serve, to serve first.”

Servant leadership is something that cannot be taught, it evolves and for evolving a servant leader the following are the characteristics that should be developed and are very crucial and critical according to Greenleaf- i) listening, ii) empathy, iii) healing, iv) awareness, v) persuasion, vi) conceptualization, vii) foresight, viii) stewardship, ix) commitment to the growth of people and x) building community. With the development of these qualities, a person can evolve as a servant leader who is more humane and capable of leading-learners to develop them holistically.

Rationale of the Study

Service is the foundation of the teaching profession. Servant leadership is an approach to teaching that includes learner-focused behavior (Chonko, 2007). It is a praxis of influencing the attitudes and behaviors of others (Singh & Ryhal, 2000). Servant leadership is a very critical and significant component of the teaching-learning process because it not only makes the learning environment conducive but also has a profound impact on the effect of learning and learning experiences (Hay,2008). A healthy and trusting relationship grows between the teacher and the students and among the students where the teachers are servant leaders (Ren, 2010). Servant leadership also brings growth and development of people in a community (McClellan, 2007) and the community of teachers and students surely is not an exception. Kassira (2008) observed that teachers who follow servant leadership create an atmosphere of learning where talent, potential, and courage are manifested to their full bloom to energize student learning. Teachers who embody the philosophy of servant leadership and follow its tenets can create a classroom environment that fosters mutual enrichment of both the students and teachers as greater skill, knowledge and increased commitment develop both in the teachers and the

learners(Chonko, 2007). Besides, when learner-centric techniques have followed a sense of satisfaction grows as they feel being valued, dignified, and respected (Tinto, 2009; Lau, 2003). In spite of having all the benefits of servant leadership in the arena of the teaching-learning process, it is not implemented practically on a large scale. While much research has been conducted on servant leadership in the organizational setting (McCuddy & Cavin, 2008; Locander & Luechauer, 2006; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008), the concept of servant leadership and effective teaching in institutions of higher learning has been identified as one that requires additional research (Metzcar, 2008). Besides, the influence of servant leadership in teacher education especially in developing humane teachers and facilitating the holistic development of the learners is the area that requires in-depth study. Sharma (2015) attempts to design a structured program of holistic developments of teachers that will help to empower them to emphasize on a holistic vision of education.

So the present study has been taken to throw light on how servant leadership can influence to make teachers more humane, creating a conducive learning environment to bring holistic development in learners.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the teaching-learning process from the perspective of servant leadership.
2. To study the classroom environment where the philosophy of servant leadership is implemented.
3. To study the influence of servant leadership to make the teachers more humane for the holistic development of the learners.

Methodology

Design of the study: A case study research design has been followed for the present study.

Sample and Sampling technique: 80 students, who are studying in B.Ed. in Bijoy Krishna Girls College, Howrah, have been selected purposively as samples for the present study.

Tools and Techniques for data collection: For the first objective participatory observation and a semi-structured interview with the students(pro prospective teachers) have been conducted. For the second and third objectives both the interview schedule and the Teacher Leadership Assessment (TLA) developed by Metzcar (2008) have been administered.

Method of data analysis: For the present study, the qualitative data analysis methods have been followed. For the first objective discourse analysis, the narrative analysis method has been followed. For the second and third objectives, the analytic induction method has been followed.

Results

Teaching-learning process from the perspective of servant leadership

Through participatory observation, for two years it has been found that the teaching-learning process has the following remarkable points that influence servant leadership.

In the teaching-learning process, the learners are given utmost importance. The teacher follows the principles of heutagogy and asks the learners to decide the transactional modalities once they have an overall idea about the syllabus and its contents. Different transactional modalities like- group presentation, discussion, games, field trips, and virtual tours to different educational institutions that are working significantly in the field of special education like- ‘Shelter’, ‘NILD’, ‘NarendrapurBlind Boys Academy’ etc. are incorporated in the teaching-learning process as the primary concern is to make the learning process effective and joyful. A sense of empathy and self-confidence develops in learners when they observe special children and how they are doing excellent in curricular and co-curricular activities as the learners reflected on their field trip. Besides, the learners unanimously opined that when they have the scope to speak to their minds and contribute significantly in the teaching-learning process, their self-esteem develops and they feel interested in the teaching-learning process as the teacher follows the transactional modalities suggested by the learners.

Field visit to Narendrapur Blind Boys Academy



Visit to special education institutes-NILD, Bonhoogly, West Bengal



At intervals the teacher takes feedback from the learners regarding how the teacher can improve herself so that the learners can be served better. The teacher after taking the suggestions modifies herself according to the learners' suggestions and at the end of the semester again the learners' feedback is taken to analyze how much the teacher has improved herself. The teacher gives special attention to improve herself so that she can provide better service to the learners. This initiative influences the learners a lot as they feel that in the truest sense they are at the center of the teaching-learning process. Besides, the learners feel valued when the teacher modifies herself according to their suggestions. This also contributes to develop self-esteem in learners.

Some ideas related to the spirit of service are discussed like- the idea of Swami Vivekananda: "You cannot help anyone, you can only serve; serve the children of the Lord, serve the Lord himself, if you have the privilege." Some videos on service are shown to the learners which is followed by a discussion in groups where all the learners participate. Besides, the teacher sometimes shows and tells inspirational stories of some persons who make a change in the society overcoming their challenges which inspires the learners a lot and they find the healing element there embedded in the stories. The teacher also discusses different burning problems like torture on women, corruption, degradation of the environment with the students, and how the teachers can change the entire picture by producing human resources with humane values. So that the teacher community with a tireless craving for growth and development can work together to bring a desired change in the society. These activities have a tremendous impact on the learners as the learners who were deputed candidates in the B.Ed. course they arrange different activities like- awareness program, a cultural program where both the teachers and the students perform together, develop different models on various school subjects as the researcher has taken the initiative to donate the TLMs to different rural schools which inspires the learners a lot and they are very happy to donate the TLMs for the schools. Thus, the learners contribute significantly to resolve not only the social problems but also take initiative to provide quality education to learners and bring holistic development.

TLM donation to rural schools



Students making learners aware about Waste management



So from the response of the learners, it has been found that the teacher has different characteristics of a servant leader like- listening, empathy, persuasion, building community, and growth of the community as proposed by Greenleaf (1977) as it is obvious from the teaching-learning process which in fact are also the qualities that make a teacher a humane teacher and facilitates the holistic development of the learners.

Classroom environment where the philosophy of servant leadership is implemented

The creation of a conducive learning environment is very crucial for the holistic development of the learners where the adult learners can grow in their own space. Through the Teacher Leadership Assessment (TLA) developed by Metzcar (2008) it has been found that:

The learners feel a sense of belongingness and an amicable relationship develops from the very beginning of the course between the teacher and the learners as the teacher call by their names not by their roll numbers.

The learners feel free to discuss anything and share anything at any time if they feel that they need any help from their teacher because the teacher allows them to call her without any hesitation. They said that they find the teacher more like their elder sister than a professor. The students enjoy a free, open environment to express their opinion in the classroom.

They feel appreciated and enjoy an anxiety-free environment in the classroom as they receive encouragement and affirmation in the classroom. They get an opportunity to improve as ideal teachers. Besides, they also unanimously agreed that in the classroom the work of the learners are valued more than their reputation as fresher or deputed. All these are because the teacher puts the needs of the students ahead of her own.

Thus the students enjoy a free, conducive, anxiety-free, amicable environment in the classroom where servant leadership is implemented.

Influence of servant leadership to make the teachers more humane for the holistic development of the learners

Awareness about one's own roles and responsibilities is the primary quality towards being the change maker. The teacher has the conviction that a humane teacher who takes the whole responsibility of making the future of a country better can make thousands of students better human beings with "traditional Indian values and all basic human and Constitutional values (such as seva, ahimsa, swachchhata, satya, nishkam karma, shanti, sacrifice, tolerance, diversity, pluralism, righteous conduct, gender sensitivity, respect for elders, respect for all people and their inherent capabilities regardless of background, respect for environment, helpfulness, courtesy, patience, forgiveness, empathy, compassion, patriotism, democratic outlook, integrity, responsibility, justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity)" (NEP, 2020 P-16). Because the utmost focus is on building character based on the values mentioned earlier. This awareness and commitment to the growth of people on the part of the teacher as a change maker is also transmitted to the learners as obvious from their response.

As the teacher practices servant leadership in the classroom all the students opined that there is an environment that encourages learning, the teacher is open to receive criticism and challenges from students as while giving feedback the learners are asked to focus more on the critical aspects of the teaching of the teacher which allows visualizing the teaching-learning process from the perspective of the students and thus the teacher can improve herself. As a result of this, every student feels good as they are being valued which encourages them to practice the same thing with their students also and thus an environment surcharged with mutual respect, love, integrity, equality, and fraternity develop between teacher and student which not only make the teacher humane but also instill humane qualities in learners as well.

Working together to build a community for the development of people are the qualities that define a servant leader. The students opined that they like their teachers do believe that they are the leaders to change every situation. The students who are now appointed in different schools report to the researcher that they are working to create a conducive learning environment to bring a change in the teaching-learning process and share the experiences with the teacher even though they are now pass out students which reflects the kind of relationship that grows between the teacher and the student and the continuous development of the students as teachers. This shows that the teacher can create a community that is committed to the growth of people. This type of leadership is also helpful to bring the desired modification in the behavior of the learners. A few students cited several instances where the teacher like a friend helps them to modify their behavior. Thus servant leadership helps both the teacher and the students to grow towards becoming good human beings through the holistic development of their personalities.

The teacher uses persuasion instead of intimidation and force which the learners unanimously opined. The learners also opined that the teacher is trustworthy, non-judgmental, caring and compassionate and having honesty and maintains high integrity. Thus different qualities of servant leadership like-empathy, listening to the learners' problems, healing the mental health, foresight, persuasion, building community, and commitment to the growth of people are the catalyst and they make the teacher humane and foster holistic development of the learners.

Discussion

Teacher education is vital in creating a pool of schoolteachers that will shape the next generation. Teachers must be grounded in Indian values, languages, knowledge, ethos, and traditions. (NEP, 2020 p.42) as it is the personality of the teacher that the learners follow. A healthy, amicable and trusting relationship grows between the teacher and the students and among the students where the teachers are servant leaders (Ren, 2010). As the teacher tries to implement servant leadership in her classroom, it creates an atmosphere of learning where talent, potential and courage are manifested to its full bloom which is supported by the study of (Kassira, 2008). The teacher and the student emerge as a community to bring significant changes not only in their lives but in the society as a whole through the development of greater skill, knowledge and increased commitment both in the teachers and the learners

(Chonko,2007). Besides, the learners feel an anxiety-free, amicable, conducive learning environment as a sense of satisfaction grows as they feel being valued, dignified and respected (Tinto, 2009; Lau, 2003). The implementation of servant leadership helps both the teacher and the students to grow as effective teachers as there is a positive relationship between servant leadership and effective teaching (Jacobs, 2011). The teacher having a spiritual bent of mind and being the follower of the ideals of Swami Vivekananda has a positive influence on the learners as the learners opined that it influences them positively and this is one of the reasons why the teacher practices the philosophy of servant leadership in her classroom though it is not practiced at large in the field of teaching-learning(Chen & Chen, 2013). Rather than intimidation and force, love and compassion which are the cornerstone of servant leadership can bring the desired development among the learners (Dierendonch& Patterson, 2015). The effective development of both the teacher and the students takes place because servant leadership creates a serving culture which is the need of the hour (Liden et. al., 2014). Last but not the least the practice of servant leadership motivates the teachers and the students that it is their responsibility and how crucial they are to bring desired changes in society (Spain, 2014). Thus, the qualities of servant leadership like- empathy, listening to the learners' problems, healing the mental health, foresight, persuasion, building community and commitment to the growth of people are instrumental and make the teacher more humane and capable of ensuring holistic education for the all-round development of the learners.

Major Findings

1. The teacher and the learners work together as leaders to bring change and grow as a community when the teaching-learning process is based on the principles of servant leadership like-listening, empathy, healing, persuasion, building community and growth of the community as proposed by Greenleaf (1977).
2. The students enjoy a free, conducive, anxiety-free, amicable environment in the classroom where the servant leadership is implemented.
3. Servant leadership helps the teacher to be more humane to facilitate holistic development of the learners especially by making their character based on values like empathy, integrity, service, compassion, sincerity, accountability, etc.

Conclusion

National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes on preparing teachers grounded on Indian values and tradition. Servant leadership is based on one of the greatest values of Indian culture and tradition i.e Service. As servant leadership is based on the principles of empathy, integrity, commitment to grow together, it is very influential to make teachers to act as “a humane catalyst in teaching-learning situations for enabling the learner to discover one’s talent and to realize one’s potentialities. An accountable teacher prepares a responsible and active citizen by character building and developing human values in the learner” (NEP, 2020). So, the study suggests that servant leadership should be practiced to a large scale especially at teacher education programme so that the teacher can be more humane to prepare learners whose personalities are holistically developed.

Implications of the Study

1. The present study gives an idea to the teachers about servant leadership and the characteristics to be developed in order to be a servant leader.
2. The study shows how effective servant leadership is to create a free, congenial, conducive and anxiety-free learning environment so that the teachers can practice it in the field of teaching-learning in which it is not practiced on a large scale.
3. The present study provides a glimpse of how servant leadership works for the mutual development of both the learners and the teacher to be good human beings of values so that they develop their personalities holistically.

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