

Article

Challenges of Twenty-first Century Educational Leaders and way-out

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ABSTRACT

This 21st century is the era of uncertainty, chaos and complexities. In this article, author will be discussing some leadership theories and some of the important issues to be addressed by 21st century educational leaders like: globalization and cultural blend, ever changing technology, never ending debate on education as commodities or public goods, profit making as only objective, leading in chaos etc. This article also discuss on action to be taken to address those issues. An author hereby, proposes a blending of Greenleaf's 'servant leader' as 'Super leader' to prepare a team of 'self-leaders' as the means of achieving the objective/goals or addressing those issues. Author will also describe the role of reflective practices and introspection as a means to enhance the leadership quality of self leaders and super leaders.

Keywords: *Chaos, Complexities, Leadership, Super leader, Reflective practice*

Background of the study

There are thousands of research related to leadership and educational leadership having inconsistent results (Yukl, 2006). Numerous leadership theories and styles have been developed that resulted from the scholars and

practitioner's desire to understand, define and explain the importance of leadership. Early leadership theories focused on what qualities distinguished between leaders and followers, while subsequent theories looked at other variables such as situational factors and skill levels. Everybody should at least agree on the fact that no one style of leadership is panacea to all situation and time. This 21st century is the era of uncertainty, chaos and complexities. In this article I will be discussing some of the issues to be addressed by 21st century educational leaders, action to be taken to address those issues and proposed a blending of Greenleaf's 'servant leader' as 'Super leader' to prepare a team of 'self-leaders' as the means of achieving the objective/goals or addressing those issues. I will also describe the role of reflective practices and introspection as a means to enhance the leadership quality of self leader and super leader.

(NB: The concept of superleaders and self leader belongs to Sims and Manz, 1996 and concept of Servant leadership was by Greenleaf as cited in Hannay, n.d.; Harris, n.d.)

Short review of progress and development of leadership theories:

Researchers have attempted to define leadership throughout history. Earlier, before late 1940s, great man theorist and the trait

theorist claimed that leadership ability is inborn. People become leaders for the traits that they own intelligence, appearance and communication skills etc. (Bolden et al., 2003). Latter behavioral theorist from late 1940s to 1960s claimed effectiveness in leadership is directly related to the behavior of a leader. On the other hand, contingency theorist supported that effective leadership is dependent upon the situation and a particular style of leadership is appropriate in some situation but not necessarily all (Bolden et al., 2003; Dereli, 2003). Recent Theories about leadership has dealt with vision and charisma. Among recent ones transactional, transformational and transcendental leadership are relatively newer one (Hoy & Miskel, 2001). The concept of leadership moves from single, individual, principal leadership to a collaborative, distributive and democratic leadership, there are several contemporary leadership styles in educational institution and system too (Hoy & Miskel, 2001; Dereli, 2003).

In 1990s, Bolman and Deal (1991) developed four frames for leaderships. First structural frames which focuses on importance of formal roles and relationships in organizational structure. Second is human resource frame which imagine organizations as a fit of needs, feelings and interests of human resources. Third the political frames which is near to politico-conflict approach where resource is always scarce and power centre has access to scarce resources so organization moves in power balance. Symbolic frame which is near to humanist theories which focuses on meaning, belief and faith and organization as unique cultures which have rituals, ceremonies, heroes and myths. The crucial aspect of framework thinking is leader should know which frame

to apply in particular situations (Bolman & Deal, 1991 as cited in Dareli, 2003).

Challenges of 21st century for educational leadership:

Globalization and cultural blend:

Worldwide convergence and integration of education system with increasing mobility of students, researchers, teaching staff and institutional leaders and emerging market of academicians and researchers in international arena has compelled the educational leader to adopt global educational curriculum along with the need and demand of local markets (Reimers, 2006). This in one hand has expanded the scope of massive educational production while in the under-developed and developing countries like ours, out-migration of high-skilled human capital has created the condition of brain drain as a kind of warning too (Bhattarai, 2009; Dhungel, 2010).

Globalization and migration of academicians, researchers and students leads to cultural blend, cultural fusion and emergence of new culture. For school leaders, trying to understand all of the various cultures and perspectives of all students and their families seems an impossible and unending task (Shields & Sayani, 2005). The need to deal with conflict and tension as well as all of the other competing demands seems overwhelming. This is one of the prime challenges to be faced by 21st century leaders.

Ever changing technologies:

Twenty first century has been regarded as the age of science and technology. Technology has been regarded as one of the vital change agents of education sector today (Fullan, 2007). The rapid progress of technology and globalization has narrowed the world into a small place. The challenging aspect of

technologies is its ever changing and progressing nature and competition among the technology service provider. Keeping ourselves up-to-date with changing technology is very much important. Institutions lagging behind in technological sector are unable to face the pace of the world.

Education as a public good or commodities:

There seems an ever ending debate on education as a public good or commodities. Some strongly take education as public goods and think government is responsible for education of its people while other take it as commodities. Whatever said and done, in most of the countries there are several private educational institution which is providing education as commodities. In our country, if we go through policy documents, it can be perceived that school education is a public good and higher education is as commodities. However, till two decades back, most of the higher education was under Tribhuvan University and cost of higher education was very much subsidized. Till that time it was perceived as public good. Now, the secondary education is in cost sharing approach and higher education as cost recovery approach (Khanal & Acharya, 2063 BS). Emergence of different private schools, Montessori, colleges and even universities has strengthened the thoughts of education as commodities.

Similarly, the debate of education as commodities or public goods brings a question of equity in education. Socially marginalized and economically deprived groups of people or children must not be neglected by the school or educational system. As an educational leader, the principle of school as an agent for reducing

social and economic inequality should take the initiative to cater to the needs of these children.

Any way 'Maximize the profit:

The excess competition in the local and global market has brought the concept of total quality management (TQM), customer satisfaction as a goal to succeed in any industry whether it be a manufacturer or service provider or education institution. As, world 2nd richest person of the year 2009, Walter buffet shares that he has only two rules for success which he shares with all his CEOs and fellow executives. The first rule is: 'Don't lose shareholder money'. And the second: 'Don't forget rule number one' (CNN TV interview, 2010, date unknown). In this world of economy, the main aim of any organization is maximize the profit. And the concept of education as commodities and education-institutions as business houses also has put pressure on educational leader of such institution to run for 'Any-way maximize the profit'. But, it's not so easy. Schools and all academic institutions are very different from business enterprises as they are dealing with the "shaping" of human beings and by that you are shaping the society (Kanga & Kandenyi, 2005). Dewey urged educators and others to recognize the moral responsibility of the school to society, saying:

*'The school is fundamentally an institution erected by society to do a certain specific work—to exercise a certain specific function in maintaining the life and **advancing the welfare of society.**' ... The educational system which does not recognize this fact is a defaulter and derelict of ethical responsibility....'* (Quoted in Hickman & Alexander, 1998, p. 246 as cited in Kanga and Kandenyi, 2005)

Therefore, an interpretation of effectiveness would very much differ from effectiveness in any other system. So, the kind of leadership theories and models we need are those that really address the human nature with its sophistication. So, for 21st century leadership to be effective leaders among those dilemmas is really tough.

Leading at the age of Chaos:

Apart from above themes there are several other challenges like School Safety and Violence Prevention, Unhealthy competition and media violence, growing demand of extra effort for students leading to elevated stress level of the students, individual interest and need of different students to be addressed through flexible curriculum, which itself is a tough task (Lamichanne, 2010). There is daily debate, confrontation, dilemmas and cognitive dissonance about morality and ethical issues. As it seems the morality and ethics also changes with time and situation. After analyzing all the above mention themes and situation, we all will agree that we are at ages of chaos. Managing all these is what is called leading at edge of chaos as defined by Stuart Kauffman. He defines it as the regime of system behavior that exists between order and chaos, and where the system operates at optimal level (Van Eijnatten & Putnik, 2004; Wah, 1998).

Hargrove and Prasad (2010) have nicely presented the scenario of the 21st century school education as:

Twenty-first century classrooms are likely to be quite different from those many teachers experienced themselves. For example, they are more diverse in a variety of ways. ... Diversity is a reality, making it another reality that schools must be committed to becoming places where children from 3 to 17 have the

opportunity to learn. In order to do this, teachers cannot teach as they were taught; they must update their current practices in regard to changing school populations, increasing technology, and new ideas about how children learn. (Hargrove, & Prasad, 2010, p. 5)

All these changes have led to increased pressure on education leaders, more particularly on the principals to get results across a variety of situations. In the changing scenario, new landscapes of connections, which cannot be exhibited by cause and effect relations, need to be focused. The leaders as an effective change agent have to emphasis on the need for understanding the entire dynamics within organization and whole education system. It is crucial to acknowledge new way of understanding fluctuations, disorder, and change. To this end, "understanding of the connectivity between order and chaos is essential". For change and progress, association between these forces is vital. (Lamichhane, 2011).

How to address the issue?

Goodwin (2002) from his empirical mixed method study describes the changing role of the secondary principals in the American schools and has identified forty-five descriptors of the principal's changing role. The findings demonstrated that principals perceive significant changes in their role in the following four areas: Strategic Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Organizational Leadership, and Political and Community Leadership.

In recent years, the context of educational leaders' work has increased in complexity, which has led to changing expectations of what leaders need to know and be able to do. The context within which school leaders work has been characterized

by increasing complexity in one hand, and increasing expectations from parents on the other, and consequently greater demands for accountability.

In the increasingly complex world of education the work of leadership will require diverse types of expertise and forms of leadership flexible enough to meet changing challenges and new demands (Bush, 2009). So, to be flexible in one hand and achieving the goal in next, the leaders should be clear about 'What to achieve?'

Educational leaders, may it be Principal leader or teacher leader now have to think of giving direction to the followers, society and even to the world. The main objective in this globalize context should be sustainable development and work together to turn the world as a better place to live in. No one will object in this. So what should be done to do so? For this, we have to think globally but have to work locally. So now, I think the main objective of 21st century leaders is to instill democratic habits which will in long run prepare them to respect others' work, thoughts, human rights and views of world (Reimers, 2006) and move on doing their work they have chosen for sustainable development which in turn achieve global objective of peace, prosperity and better world to live in. This is not an easy task. It's a team work; I have to admit a global team work. Now the educational leaders have to work on developing team, team at local level, actual physically existing team and virtual team. Virtual teams are important because of their ability to bridge discontinuities of time and geography to enable access to and transfer of knowledge across geographic and organizational boundaries, thus leveraging human and intellectual capital. (Duarte & Snyder, 2001 as cited in Heckman et al, n.d.). Because they can rapidly bring

together the specific expertise needed to solve immediate problems regardless of geographical location, virtual teams also permit organizations to respond quickly to unexpected changes in the environment and to non-routine problems. As a result, virtual teams are an increasingly important part of the adaptive capability of an organization to respond to uncertainty and complexity (Heckman, n.d.). So, in short we can say it's about building a team, networks of team, virtual team and network of diverse types of expertise which can work on any problem that emerge in this complex and Chaos milieu.

Developing a team of self-leaders by Super leaders:

As, in previous section we came to a conclusion that concept of single leaders is not appropriate at this age. There should be a team work, distributive type of leadership style and good networking among the leaders (Harris & Spillane, 2008) working on same goals, helping and supporting each other with their expertise to achieve the global goal of prosperity, peace and making a world better place to live in. Education is only sector which has direct influence to achieve this goal as education and its system shape the mind set up of the society and a country. As, people working in education, components of internal and external environment of any educational institutions and educational system do not possess simple linear relation but has non-linear and complex relations. In this scenario we have in one hand complex and chaotic situation and in other hand need of team leadership, networking and virtual organization. So, here, I propose the use of 'Self leadership' and 'Super leader' as the way out, the concept well discussed and researched by Sims and Manz (as cited in Harris, n.d.). To become a super-leader one

should be a self leader first and by being a 'super leader' one has to work for developing several 'self leaders'. Off course each of them can be super leader again. But again, it is always important that all the super hero and self leaders with similar motives should be on a network to achieve each goal.

Super leadership and self leadership:

Before moving to Super-Leadership, which is leading others to lead themselves, it is important to understand what "lead themselves" means. Sims and Manz (1996) coined the phrase "self-leadership" as the moniker for "lead themselves." "Self-leadership" suggests "purposeful leadership toward personal standards of behavior and performance" (Sims & Manz, 1996, p. 87 as cited in Harris, n.d.). This viewpoint suggests that individuals are responsible for setting their own goals, and that organizational control systems are not necessary and in fact often hinder the process of leadership.

Three basic assumptions underlie self-leadership (Sims & Manz, 1996 as cited in Harris, n.d.). First, everyone practices self-leadership to some degree, but not everyone is an effective self-leader. Second, self-leadership can be learned and thus is not restricted to people who are "born" to be self-starters or self-motivated. Finally, self-leadership is relevant to everyone who works. These ideas are the backbone of their theories, showing their fundamental beliefs that leadership can be learned, and that everyone can, and should be, a self-leader.

Behavior-focused leadership strategies are important in the self-leadership process. Behavior-focused leadership strategies are specific actions that we apply to ourselves, so we can perform better. Some of these strategies include self-goal-setting, self-observation, self-evaluation, self-reward, self-

punishment, cueing strategies, and rehearsal (Harris, n.d.). These strategies are particularly geared towards helping individuals successfully complete those tasks that are annoying and difficult, yet necessary.

Part of self-leadership is building natural motivation into work. Some strategies for building this motivation include (Sims & Manz, 1996 as cited in Harris, n.d.):

- (1) Redesign work to increase natural rewards
- (2) Search for natural rewards that already are part of the work
- (3) Build natural rewards into the work
- (4) Focus dwelling on what you like as opposed to what you do not like about the work.

A third set of strategies that Sims and Manz advocate for self-leadership is cognitive-focused. These strategies specifically deal with the control and influence with one's own thoughts. Some of these tactics include mental imagery, mental rehearsal, cognitive self-talk, and self-management of beliefs and assumptions. The ultimate goal is "opportunity thinking" instead of "obstacle thinking" (Sims & Manz, 1996 as cited in Harris, n.d.). Since self-leadership is so closely related to SuperLeadership, research and more theoretical ideas will be covered in the section on SuperLeadership.

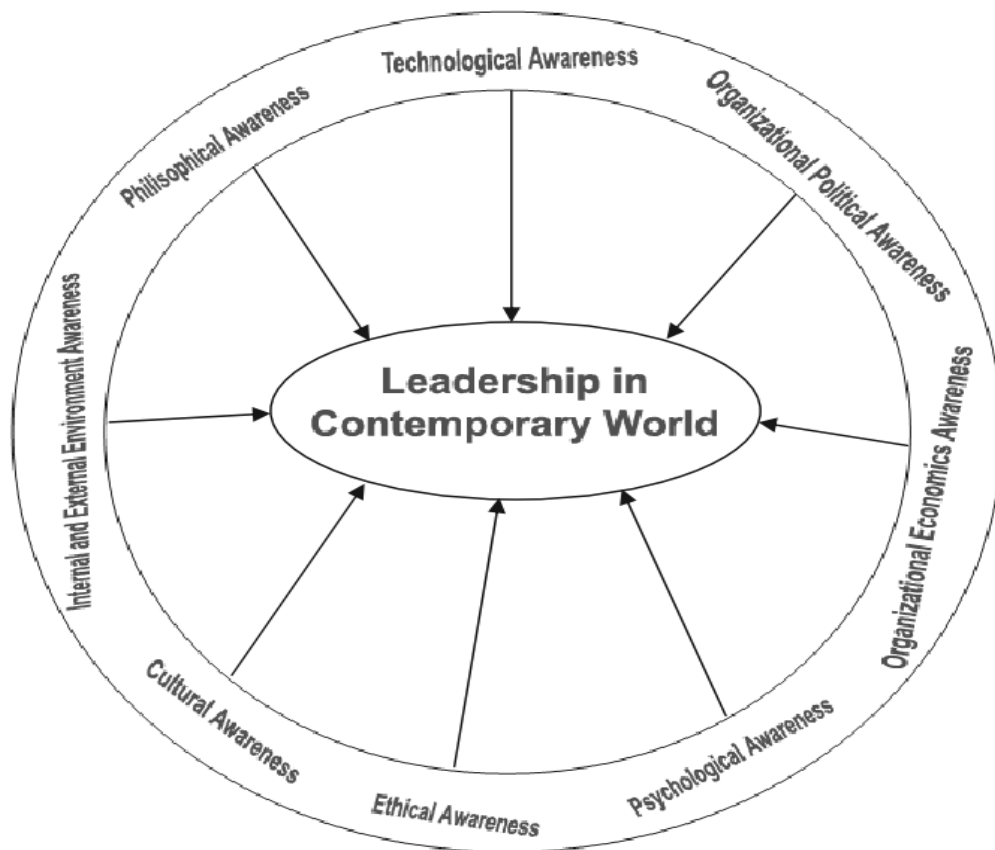
Since becoming a self-leader is the first step in SuperLeadership, the implication of self-leadership is that the leader learn, use, and, most importantly for team members, model self-leadership behaviors.

Awareness as important component of effective leadership of 21st century:

In this age of chaos and complexities, right decision is most at right moments. For this,

right information at right time is most. So awareness about internal and external environment is obligate. Based on the contemporary perspectives of educational leadership, Kanga and Kandenyi (2005) emphasized on awareness as important component and proposes that true leaders are those who are able to apply: philosophical, psychological, social, cultural, political, economics, ethical, technological, and organizational internal- and external-environment **awareness** to influence others toward the achievement of goals by working with them and through them (Sum, 2010).

diversity characterizing schools in 21st century call for thinking leadership styles that will **inspire all interested** parties (educators, educationist, learners, society/parents) for '**desired outcomes**' to be realized. To inspire all, the leader should have good awareness of everything (as discussed earlier). So by merging this concept of Ash and Parsall with the concept of 'self-leader' and 'super-leader' of Sims & Manz along with the idea of Greenleaf about servant leadership (Hannay, n.d.; Kanga & Kandenyi, 2005; Ash & Parsall, 2000), I propose model for leadership development (to develop an educational leader of 21st century). In this proposition, at first a person



(Source: Sum, 2010 at <http://www.vichetsum.com>)

Kanga & Kandenyi (2005) stressed supporting Ash & Parsall (2000) that the

should have motive to lead by serving others as a 'Servant leader', concept forwarded by Greenleaf in 1970s. The notion of which is "To

lead is to serve.” Then as second step, s/he has to develop himself/herself as ‘self leader’ who is well aware of internal (own nature) and external environment and situations. The awareness domain includes: philosophical, psychological, social, cultural, political, economics, ethical, technological, and organizational internal- and external-environment awareness (Sum, 2010). Then, as next step, the self –leader will transcend him/herself to the ‘super-leader’ as a leader of a team or several team of ‘self-leaders’ each of them working with their teams. Each self-leader can transcend him/herself to be a super-leader. Now, all super leaders, all self-leaders and their teams should be on a network and should work together in achieving a global goal of creating an educational environment in which the curriculum and pedagogies are to develop 21st century human as a global citizen who are well aware of their duties, responsibilities to develop the world as a peace, prosper and better place to live in through sustainable development.

As a super leader any principal or teacher leader will use their awareness to develop all the *interested parties* (educators, educationist, learners, society/parents etc) as a ‘self-leader’ by raising their awareness through all the means used by ‘Servant leaders’. Servant leaders (if in leadership-position) focus on giving everything their subordinates need to win or achieve the goal, be it resources, time, guidance, or inspiration (Greenleaf, 1987 as cited in Hannay, n.d.). Servant leaders know that providing for people and **engaging hearts and minds foster a workforce** that understands the benefits of striving for the greater good (Hannay, n.d).

“Teams... have become the most common vehicle through which self-leadership is

expressed... “Teams are a type of collective or group self-leadership. (Manz & Sims, 1996, p. 156, 171 as cited in Harris, n.d.) The SuperLeader makes it happen by initiating, encouraging, and supporting empowered teams”.

Lao Tzu best expressed the idea behind Super Leadership and servant leadership: “the best of all leaders is the one who helps people so that, eventually, they don’t need him” (as cited by Harris, n.d.). Super Leadership is the practice of leading others to lead themselves. True leadership comes from within, the feeling to serve others right from the heart. In the end, achievement flows from follower self-leadership (Greenleaf, 1987 as cited in Hannay, n.d.; Harris, n.d.). The idea of super leadership and servant leadership both emphasize on followers, and especially the notion of developing followers who are effective self-leaders.

The Awareness and Reflective practices:

There is no doubt that we are at the age of chaos and complexities with lots of issues to be addressed in education sector. In this competitive world, unhealthy competition and media violence, school safety and violence prevention, the growing demand of extra effort for students leading to elevated stress level of the students, the individual interest and need of different students to be addressed, carrying out flexible curriculum, are some of the issues to be addressed by educational leaders of this age in one hand while there is an never-ending debate on education as a public good or commodities in the next. There are several confrontation, dilemmas and cognitive dissonance faced by educational leaders about morality and ethical issues (Furman, 2003). Economical practice for getting maximum profit in this fast growing world has changed the concept

of morality and ethics and made it changeable things with time and situation. This is as leading at the edge of chaos and complexities. Making decision at complex situations where there is no linear relationship among the factors and components involved (Shields & Sayani, 2005). The need to deal with conflict and tension as well as all of the other competing demands seems overwhelming. There is no linear cause and effect relationship. So, lots of decisions are to be made instantly and at very new complex situations (Shields & Sayani, 2005; Marion & McGee, 2006; Crow, 2006). The rational decision is sometimes difficult and sometimes there is no time for collecting information for rational decisions. The leader has to believe in his/her intuition alone. In this age of chaos and complexities, it is very vital to take right decision at right times because the decision can affect the whole system which is very complex. Just a single wrong decision can lead to more chaos and disorder and can have long-lasting effect.

Sum (2010) emphasized on awareness as important component and proposes that true leaders are those who are able to apply: philosophical, psychological, social, cultural, political, economics, ethical, technological, and organizational internal- and external-environment **awareness** to lead. Awareness of all above aspects leads to better intuition to take right decision at crucial movements. Reflective practices including critical thinking and critical reflections are one of the ways of developing intuition and be aware of internal and external environment. Kanga and Kandenyi (2005) also from their study concluded that 'Intuitive leadership' is the leadership that we need at this stage (of chaos and complexities) and can be developed through reflective practice.

Reflective practice and critical thinking:

Reflection or "critical reflection" refers to an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated (Richards, 2010). Moon defines reflective practice as "a set of abilities and skills, to indicate the taking of a critical stance, an orientation to problem solving or state of mind" (as cited in Hinnet, 2002, pp 5). The theory of reflective practice is attributed primarily to Donald Schon, whose work is based on the study in wide range of professionals. Most of the event in professional life is unexpected events or surprises, which may trigger two kinds of reflections as described by Schon (1983). The first, "reflection in action," occurs immediately. It is the ability to learn and develop continually by creatively applying current and past experiences and reasoning to unfamiliar events while they are occurring. The second, "reflection on action," occurs later. It is a process of thinking back on what happened in a past situation, what may have contributed to the unexpected event, whether the actions taken were appropriate, and how this situation may affect future practice (Schon, 1983 as cited in Kaufman, 2003).

Bolton (2001), who advocates about reflective practices through narrative writing states: 'Reflective practice through writing is a way of expressing and expressing and exploring our own and others stories: crafting and shaping them to help us understand and develop'. The importance of reflecting on what you are doing, as part of the learning process, has been emphasized by many investigators. There is much agreement in the literature that reflective practices are critically important in the development of professionals including leadership development (Bolton, 2001; Gnawali, 2008; Levine, Kern, & Wright, 2008; Rucinski & Bauch, 2006).

As discussed in Wlodarsky and Walters (2007), reflective thinking and teaching have also been defined as metacognition or self-monitoring based on cognitive-meditational theories of learning. The internal thought processes and external experiences collectively become or contribute to "metacognition." Metacognition is "thinking about one's own thinking," (Wlodarsky and Walters, 2007) and it can be related to reflection or reflective practice as it involves thinking explicitly on thought, experience, or action and has profound implications in different professional developments. (Levine, Kern, & Wright, 2008).

CONCLUSION

Everybody should at least agree on the fact that no one style of leadership is panacea to all situation and time. In this competitive world, unhealthy competition and media violence, school safety and violence prevention, the growing demand of extra effort for students leading to elevated stress level of the students, the individual interest and need of different students to be addressed, carrying out flexible curriculum, are some of the issues to be addressed by educational leaders of this age in one hand while there is an never-ending debate on education as a public good or commodities in the next. There are several confrontation, dilemmas and cognitive dissonance faced by educational leaders about morality and ethical issues. Globalization and cultural blend with the fast growing technological development adds more complexities and chaos in the scenario.

Making decision at complex situations where there is no linear relationship among the factors and components involved is intricate in one hand and lots of decisions are to be made instantly and at very new complex

situations in the next. Rational decision may not work or may not be applicable. The leader has to believe in his/her intuition alone. So, here in this article I proposed awareness as the main component to lead.

So, to lead in the diversity of 21st century with all complexities leadership styles that will **inspire all interested** parties (educators, educationist, learners, society/parents) for '**desired outcomes**' to be realized. I here in this article propose model for leadership development (to develop an educational leader of 21st century). In this proposition, at first a person should have motive to lead by serving others as a 'Servant leader', concept forwarded by Greenleaf in 1970s. The notion of which is "To lead is to serve." Then as second step, s/he has to develop himself/herself as 'self leader' who is well aware of internal (own nature) and external environment and situations. The awareness domain includes: philosophical, psychological, social, cultural, political, economics, ethical, technological, and organizational internal- and external-environment awareness. Then, as next step, the self-leader will transcend him/herself to the 'super-leader' as a leader of a team or several team of 'self-leaders' each of them working with their teams. Each self-leader can transcend him/herself to be a super-leader. Now, all super leaders, all self-leaders and their teams should be on a network and should work together in achieving a global goal of creating an educational environment in which the curriculum and pedagogies are to develop 21st century human as a global citizen who are well aware of their duties, responsibilities to develop the world as a peace, prosper and better place to live in through sustainable development.

As, I have pointed out **Awareness** of internal and external nature is vital aspects that leads

to better intuition to take right decision at right time at crucial movements, reflective practices including critical thinking and critical reflections are some of the ways of developing intuition and awareness.

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NB: This article is republished with the consent of Author and Journal with small modification - 'Nepal Journal of Social Sciences and Management.' This article was published in Nepal Journal of Social Sciences and Management (2014); Vol. 2 (1): 5-16.