

Construction Of Academic Leadership Competency Framework With Grounded Theory Approach

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Abstract

India holds a central place in the global education system and has one of the largest networks of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). So far, academic research has focused on competency mapping of teaching staff in Higher Education Institutions while the same needs to be addressed for academic leaders as well. Competency mapping plays a significant role in identifying key talent which has a significant bearing on performance curve of an organization. The present study addresses this research gap through the construction of Academic Leadership Competency Framework using the grounded theory in qualitative research. The triangulation method was used for convergence of information from different sources. Data was collected from academic leaders, faculty members, administrative staff and students through Focus Group Discussions and In-depth interviews. Conventional and summative content analysis of the qualitative data was done to produce thematic codes resulting in a seven dimensional framework of academic leadership competencies. This study contributes to existing body of literature by constructing the Academic Leadership Competency Framework (ALCF) for recruitment and development of talent in the higher education sector.

Key Words: Competency mapping, academic leadership, grounded theory, triangulation approach

Introduction

The world is experiencing a global realignment with speedy advancements in technology, lifestyle and culture. The rules of the game are changing in every field, be it business or

academics. Higher education is continuously facing a significant change (Milburn,2010). Universities face multiple challenges: leading institutional renewal, to attract and retain top faculty and staff, to embrace advancements in educational technology, to meet demands of the public, employers, students, employees and to seek new and alternate sources of funds etc. This creates the demand for leaders who are competent to face the challenges of managing change, fostering innovation and trust (Brown L. M., 2001). The professional entities have broadened and new frames are required for new identities (Whitchurch, 2007). Academic leaders play a significant role in defining the educational achievement of the institution (Mahdinezhad et al., 2013). Academic leadership is a vital constituent in striving towards academic intelligence and it calls for robust, inventive and operative leadership. Thus, an effective leadership is the key to success of an educational institution (Rowley, 1997).

In the context of developing nations like India, Higher education has always been prioritized as reflected in the ever-increasing number of universities and colleges. According to University Grants Commission (UGC) of India the number of students enrolled in the higher education system has gone up to about 3.74 crores in 2018-19. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) rose to 26.3 per cent in 2018-19, while the aim is to increase it to 50 per cent by 2035 (UGC, 2019). There is a need to bring out world-class educational hubs that can match the institutions of the countries like China and U.S who have GER of 48.1% and 88% respectively. To provide quality education matching global standards, there is a demand of competent academic leaders and a structured approach to their competency mapping.

National Education Policy (2020), issued by Ministry of Education, Government of India is a bold step towards raising the bar in terms of quality of higher education, to match the global standards. The policy candidly states that suboptimal governance and leadership of Higher Education Institutions is a major challenge. The revised policy envisions a complete metamorphosis of the higher education system by reviving the forthrightness of faculty and institutional leadership. The policy clearly spells out that selection of academic leaders shall be carried out by the Board of Governors through a rigorous, impartial, merit-based, and competency-based process (Ministry of Education, GOI, 2020).

1. Competency Mapping Framework

A competency framework is an outline that systematizes lists of competencies essential for actual performance in a definite job (Chouhan & Srivastava, 2013). Competency is behavioral characteristic of an individual. It is a combination of causal abilities with subjective knowledge and applied skills resulting in effective performance (Maheshkar, 2015). It is described as combination of knowledge, skills, self-concepts, traits and motives that results in critical behaviors instrumental for effective performance (Chouhan & Srivastava, 2013). In simple terms, it refers to a person's suitability for job performance (Bharathy et al., 2013). It is found that emotional, social, cognitive and intelligence competencies predict effectiveness in professional, managerial and leadership roles in all sectors of society and these competencies can be developed in adults (Boyatzis, 2008).

Competency mapping is a strategic HR practice for monitoring the performance and development of human assets in organizations. Competency based talent management can improve efficiency by recognizing the key characteristics of top performers and analyzing in which aspects employees with excellent performance differ from those with average performance. Effectively mapped competencies decode the strategic vision and goals of the organization into behavioral actions that leaders must demonstrate thus, competency mapping augments organizational effectiveness (Dalvi, 2016).

In 1980, Patricia McLagan introduced competency models as a key point for all human resource management systems like planning, organizing and development (McLagan, 1980). McLagan defined a competency model as a tool which describes the key capabilities required to perform a job.

Extant academic research focused on competency mapping of teaching personnel in higher education sector (Ahmed, 2017). In the context of higher education, the Academic Leaders namely Heads of Departments and Heads of Institutions play a critical role in navigating the institutions to achieve globally benchmarked quality standards. Hence their role deserves an enquiry from the perspective of competency mapping. Research in this direction would reveal the competencies critical for success in academic leadership role. There is a practical need to select and retain academic leaders possessing the competencies required for enabling effective performance (Schlueter & Walke, 2008). Hence, this paper seeks to develop a framework describing competencies of successful academic leaders, specifically for the higher education sector.

2. Academic Leadership Competencies

Leadership is a performing art with numerous roles and these roles are to be enacted variously in varied situations (Pearce, 2007). Dynamics, complexity and diversity of global environment are diffusing into domestic environment and thus the demand for leadership competencies is increasing at all organizational levels for effective and efficient management. Superior performance of higher education institutions requires competent personnel fitting well into the role of academic leaders.

A conceptual framework developed by Moore & Rudd (2004) for directors and administrators, emphasized on presence of conceptual skills, technical skills, industry knowledge, human skills and emotional intelligence. Pro-Vice Chancellors and Principals of academic institutions need to have a clear vision of strategic goals, keep abreast with global academic system, possess academic integrity, remain open to change and have an inclusive approach (Spendlove, 2007).

Successful leaders of community colleges possess competencies like effective selection of personnel, performance management, data driven decision making, collaborative leadership, leading through digital disruption and change management skills (Nan, 2006; McNair & Benerd, 2009; McNair et al., 2011; Townsend & Moyo, 2014; Hammons & Keller, 2015). According to Higher Education leadership competencies model (HELC) developed by American council of education of senior leaders, the leaders need to understand the leadership context, content, processes and analytical approach and need to be well equipped to look after student development and maintain external relations (McDaniel, 2002). The HELC model was revised in 2010 using quantitative tools. Five competency categories emerged in the revised model, namely, analytical approach, communication skills, managing student affairs, behavioral skills, and external relations (Smith & Wolverton, 2015).

Review of extant literature highlighted the need for constructing a comprehensive yet precise framework specifically applicable for competency mapping of academic leaders in the context of developing nations like India. Such a framework is required for selection and development of competent academic leaders as emphasized by National Education Policy, 2020 (Ministry of Education, 2020). Competency framework can be used as a template for hiring. The new recruits can be judged on the basis of competencies that they possess thus reducing the cost of recruitment (Scott et al., 2008; Debowski and Blake, 2004). This also ensures job fit of the candidate and the organizational fit along with effective performance (Kulkarni & Tripathi, 2016). A well-developed competency mapping framework is not only required for accurate selection of academic leaders but is also instrumental for effective

performance management (Shet et al., 2019). Competency-based strategies are not optional but essential to gain sharp focus on strategic and systematic selection and development of employees (Carroll & Mc. Crackin, 1998).

The present study addresses the need for constructing a framework that serves as a base for structuring academic leadership selection tests, interviews and assessment centers. Such a competency framework is necessary to act as a reference point for framing performance appraisal criteria specifically applicable to academic leaders. Higher Education Institutions and central bodies offering continuing education programs for academic leaders need a benchmark for designing curriculum of academic leadership development programs. Hence, construction of comprehensive and well-defined academic leadership framework is essential. Thus, the present study aims at fulfilling the research gap by proposing Academic Leadership Competency Framework (ALCF) for higher education sector.

3. Methodology

Qualitative research methods are increasingly being used to explore various aspects in social sciences. The present study adopted grounded theory method developed by Barney Glaser & Anselm Strauss in the book named 'Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research'. Grounded theory is a type of qualitative method that allows the researcher to collect information systematically and to inductively arrive at a formal theory to explain it (Glaser & Straus, 1967). Grounded theory is a structured, yet flexible methodology for collection, analysis and interpretation of data. One of the defining characteristics of Grounded theory is that it aims to generate theory that is grounded in the data (Tie et al., 2018). Since the authenticity of grounded theory rests in validity of data, Triangulation method was adopted to ensure authenticity. Triangulation implies the adoption of multiple methods or data sources to obtain a comprehensive knowledge of phenomena (Patton, 1999). Triangulation has been considered as a qualitative research strategy to evaluate validity through a process of convergence of information from various sources.

In the present study academic leadership competencies were identified from the perspective of four key stakeholders namely *academic leaders, faculty members, administrative staff and students*. Respondents were selected by using judgment sampling method, to deliberately select people that were best suited to enable the researcher to address the research questions.

Data, collected from multiple sources using multiple techniques like in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using content analysis with Grounded theory approach. In-depth interviews with academic leaders and Focus Group Discussions with faculty, administrative staff and students were conducted to collect data. The respondents in the category of academic leaders (N=10) included Heads of Departments, Deans, Directors, Pro Vice Chancellors, Vice Chairmen & Executive Deans of six Higher Education Institutions in India. The second category of respondents (N=50) included 33 faculty members and 17 administrative staff. The third category consisted of students (N=53). The final sample size comprised of 113 respondents from the same set of Higher Education Institutions.

The respondents represented a diverse range of demographics (viz. gender, age, locale, education streams and hierarchical level). For ethical reasons, anonymity and confidentiality of respondents was assured. The data collection reached a stage of saturation and redundancy after 10 In-depth interviews and 8 Focus Group Discussions. Data in the form of textual descriptions was analyzed using conventional and summative content analysis to produce thematic codes.

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The In-depth interviews were structured in nature and based on a predefined interview schedule and conducted as per protocol suggested by Boyce & Neale, (2006). The interviews were recorded with prior consent of the interviewees and transcripts were prepared for data analysis.

The interviews were structured to elicit response on the key roles and responsibilities of academic leaders and competencies required for success in this role. Key questions were preplanned, but the interviews were also conversational, with questions flowing from previous responses. Key questions like- (1) Cite some new projects and initiatives spearheaded (2) The top five competencies which helped in achieving the desired results (3) Elaborate on the key roles and responsibilities as head of an institute / department (4) What are the major competencies to be possessed by an academic leader to create world class higher education institutions alongside professional success of the academic leader. (5) Share your vision regarding Indian Higher Education Institutions to compete globally.

The respondents spoke at length about these issues, vividly profiling their roles and responsibilities, citing specific examples and experiences bringing out the competencies that were critical for the success of an academic leader in Higher Education Institutions. The structured approach helped in focusing on the agenda for smooth conduct of interviews (Merriam, 2009). Each interview lasted for 60 to 90 minutes.

Data were collected from faculty members, administrative staff and students through Focus Group Discussions with a set of 12-15 respondents in each group discussion. A total of 4 Focus Group discussions were conducted with distinct groups of faculty members and administrative staff as one category and another 4 Focus Group discussions were conducted students as a separate category. The Focus Group Discussions with staff and students elicited the participants' view points on questions like (1) what does leadership mean to you (2) competencies critical to the success of academic leaders were asked by prompting them to visualize the most effective academic leader they have ever come across (3) top five vital competencies exhibited by the selected academic leaders, in various circumstances (4) have you ever got a chance to lead any project and what important competencies helped you to successfully handle that project (5) In Higher Education Institutions, what factors distinguish the excellent academic leaders from the average ones.

The focus group discussions were recorded with prior consent of the participants and transcripts were prepared for data analysis. The respondents actively participated in the discussion citing their personal experiences with academic leaders. Each discussion lasted for 60 - 90 min. The qualitative data so collected was analyzed via open coding method. Four-stage process was incorporated 1) Condensing 2) Coding 3) Categorizing and 4) Theorizing into The Academic Leadership Competency Framework.

4. Analysis and Findings

The recorded in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were reviewed for the purpose of qualitative data analysis. At the first stage, essential sorting and condensing was conducted (Miles et al., 2014), looking for the relevant utterances of the participants on the theme – competencies required for success of academic leadership role. All such utterances were recorded verbatim. At the second stage, coding was done for each section of data (utterance) rendering to the aspect it signified, as also validated by Tracy (2013). So this stage was driven by data and not driven by theory, equally matched to the first stage, for instance establishment was not done on a priori code however, somewhat on inductive ones, which were settled by uninterrupted analysis of the impression hinged by participants concerning academic leadership competencies (Marshall and Rossman, 2011; Flick, 2009; Rossman and

Rallis, 2012). After collecting the essence of utterances in the second stage, the third one was categorization. In this stage related utterances were accumulated into clusters to simplify their significances and produce categories. Last stage was theorizing which aimed to grasp a thematic code for categories obtained in the preceding stage, and to know how those categories were interrelated and inclined to each other as fragments of one abstract theme (Richards & Morse, 2013).

Analysis of qualitative data regarding the competencies required for success in academic leadership role, revealed a comprehensive set of diverse attributes. In the words of the respondents, “academic leader needs to envision and see a broader picture for institutional growth”; “...think out of the box and be ready to handle disruptive changes.....be it in technology, industry needs, faculty preferences, and ways of handling today’s generation of students!”; “an academic leader must play constructive role in policy formulation, development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and their implementation.....”.

The above cited observations were supported by majority of the academic leaders, staff and students. After condensing and coding the utterances of respondents they were clubbed under the category “**transformational leadership competency**”. This competency was theorized on the basis of extensive range of elements cited in literature, like being visionary, having vision and imagination, think broadly, perception management and creative thinking (Muller & Turner, 2009; Rouse, 2011; Hammons & Keller, 2015; Stevens et al, 2014; Jokinen 2006; Spendlove, 2007). Transformational Leadership competency thematically represents the sub categories viz. (a) Envisioning skills/ perception management (b) Change Management (c) Ability to direct, command, influence, lead and shape the future (d) Goal & achievement oriented (e) Ability to establish structures – Policies and Procedures.

The Executive Dean of Faculty of Technology and Sciences of a renowned university mentioned, “It is very important to do homework before you put up a plan and it should be meticulously evaluated what and how work is to be done.....leaders need to play multiple roles and be adept at multitasking.” This, according to him, is a part of management skill. Another Professor and Head of a dental college opined, “planning and execution plays an important role in successful administration and governance of an institution.....as to start a new program one needs to be a risk taker.... .” The Pro-Vice Chancellor of a medical college highlighted the importance of getting funds and grants for the institutions as another part of management skill.

The above cited utterances were acknowledged by majority of the academic leaders, faculty members, administrative staff and students. After condensing and coding the utterances of respondents they were categorized into “**Strategic Management and Administrative skills**”. This competency was theorized on the basis of synchronization with the findings of extant studies pertaining to management skill, administration and governance, risk taking, multitasking, time management, accountability and alignment with the national agenda (Joshi & Lazaro, 2015; Nan, 2006; McNair et al, 2011; McNair & Benerd, 2009; McDaniel 2002; Cheetam & Chivers, 1996; Chung-Herrera et al, 2003; Gentry & Leslie, 2007; Shahmandi et al, 2011; Smith & Wolverton, 2015; Brownell, 2006). Strategic Management and administrative skills thematically represent the sub categories viz. (a) Management skills (b) University governance and administrative skills (c) Risk Taking (d) Time management (e) Multi-tasking (f) Accountability-oriented behavior (g) Alignment with national agenda.

Further analysis of the responses revealed the significance of academic expertise as an important competency of academic leaders, as the Principal of a medical college said, “I

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never repeat my lectures. Every year I consult 6-7 books to prepare interesting lectures. My lectures were so interesting that there was a hall of 140 students and students used to sit in between on stairs to listen to my lectures.....”

During one of the focus group discussion with faculty members, ‘technological expertise’ was brought out as an essential competency. As illustrated by the words of one of the faculty members, “that I feel technological mindset along with Professional self-updation is important to avoid dependence on others....” Significance of technological skills for academic leaders was also substantiated by previous studies (Chouhan & Srivastava, 2013, Moore & Rudd, 2004, Townsend & Moyo, 2014). Respondent students unanimously agreed that technical skills of academic leaders are essential to develop the industry ready workforce. Further they emphasized that Heads of Department must be practically sound and aware of industry expectations like research and innovation so that necessary modification in curriculum can be made from time to time. One of the Deans opined “The research should be relevant to the society or should serve to the needs of industry.....” which is corroborated by Hammons & Keller, 2015. After condensing and coding these statements of respondents were categorized into ‘**Professional Expertise**’. This competency was theorized on the basis of synchronization with the findings of extant studies pertaining to the significance of academic expertise, technological upgradation, research orientation, interdisciplinary knowledge, professional development, (Brownell, 2006; Townsend & Moyo, 2014; Moore & Rudd, 2004; Jokinen, 2006; Rouse, 2011; Chung-Herrera et al, 2003; Yeung et al, 1996). Professional Expertise thematically represents the subcategories namely (a) Academic expertise (b) Tech-savvy (c) Research orientation (d) Interdisciplinary Knowledge (e) Professional self-updating and transformation (f) Practically sound (g) Awareness of industry expectations.

After analyzing the statements of academic leaders, administrative staff, faculty members and students by applying triangulation approach it was theorized that problem solving approach plays an important role as a critical success factor. Leaders face many challenging situations arising from academic ecosystem which requires them to think critically, act proactively and take decisions in the larger interest of the students and organization. One of the faculty members quoted "I prefer to work with Heads who are able to take performance deficiencies positively. They analyze the reasons for failure rather than blame people for the same. They bounce back quickly and come to the drawing board to frame new strategies proactively....". A senior academic administrator observed, “After joining the engineering college in 2001 as principal I faced lot of challenges as the college had only 400 students, deficient infrastructure, and financial resources. I slowly dealt with entire crisis and managed to enhance the quality of education benefitting 7000 students eventually.....” After condensing and coding, these statements of respondents were categorized into ‘**Problem Solving Skills**’ This competency was theorized on the basis of corroboration with the findings of extant studies pertaining to the significance of psychological hardiness, crisis handling ability, enterprising nature, apt decision making and action orientation (Cheetam & Chivers, 1996; Chung-Herrera et al, 2003; Stevens et al, 2014; Yeung et al, 1996; Muller & Turner, 2009; Gentry & Leslie, 2007; Nan, 2006). Problem solving skills thematically represents the subcategories namely (a) Crisis Management (b) Critical Thinking (c) Resilience (d) Proactive approach (e) Decision making skills.

During focus group discussion students shared, “attitude of the teachers as well as

head of the department plays a significant role in solving our problems. HODs who practice what they preach become the role model for us....". Attitude is reflected in the form of behavior. Specifically referring to academic leaders they emphasized upon they need to be humble, rational, good listener, empathetic and have an inclusive approach. On application of triangulation approach to the statements of academic leaders, administrative staff, faculty members and students a common thread was found in terms of attitudinal orientation as a significant competency of academic leaders. After condensing and coding these statements were categorized into "**Attitudinal Orientation**". This competency was theorized on the basis of validation with the findings of extant studies pertaining to the instrumental role of positive attitude, behavior and self management skills making a leader the role model for others (Brownell, 2006; Mendenhall, 2006; Gentry & Leslie, 2007; Smith & Wolverson, 2015; Hammons & Keller, 2015; Jokinen, 2006; Bakanauskiene & Martinkiene, 2011, Stevens et al, 2014, Yeung et al, 1996). Attitudinal Orientation thematically represents the subcategories namely (a) Behavior (b) Emotional Intelligence (c) Moral and Ethical Values (d) Personal Traits (e) Self-awareness (f) Self-management (g) Stress management (h) Professionalism

On interaction with various heads from different fields as training and placement, dental, engineering and management it came up that one of the strong and the major competency to be possessed by an academic leader was to build relations via networking and also establishing a connect with staff and students. As a student said "My guide makes it a point to drop a courtesy mail or SMS, after meeting someone." During the in-depth interview with the head of training and placement, he elaborated.... "it is important to get connected with industry for training of students and also to bridge the gap between the industry and academia. It is important also to get projects for better learning which again is possible via linking. Along with that connecting within the organization with staff and students is equally important." One of the Vice Chancellor said, "Have faith on the students, give autonomy, make them confident, empower them...have a judgement as to what is strength of people. You may be governing 100 people but everyone has his own strength." Another Pro Vice Chancellor opined, "Since it's important to address issues effectively so communication skills are necessary for academic leaders." This competency was theorized and the verbatim was condensed and coded to '**Interpersonal Skills**' in coherence with the findings of (Joshi & Lazarova, 2015; Shahmandi et al, 2011; Moore & Rudd, 2004; Scholtes, 1999; Jokinen, 2006; Chung-Herrera et al, 2003; Nan, 2006; Chouhan & Srivastava, 2013; Gentry & Leslie, 2007; Mendenhall, 2006; Yeung et al, 1996; Rouse, 2011; Smith & Wolverson, 2015; Townsend & Moyo, 2014). Interpersonal skills thematically represent sub categories namely (a) Communication skills (b) Team Management skills (c) Networking and Liasioning skills (d) Talent Management (e) Conflict resolution (f) Coaching and mentoring staff (g) Connecting with students (h) Social judgement skills

"This is the right time for the higher education institutions to compete globally because of encouraging political leadership, vibrant democracy, vast talent pool, improving infrastructure and digitalization. But unfortunately, people looking for job opportunities move out of India" a statement by the Pro-Vice Chancellor of a renowned university clearly defines the need for academic leaders to have a global mindset. The respondents elaborated that this is possible only if the leader accepts complexity and understands diversity in line with the findings of previous studies (Joshi & Lazarova, 2015; Scholtes, 1999). On condensing and coding these utterances were categorized into '**Global Mindset**'. This competency was theorized on the basis of similarity with findings of previous studies (Mendenhall, 2006; Stevens et al, 2014; Jokinen, 2006). This competency represents subcategories (a)

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Acceptance of complexity (b) Think globally (c) Diversity consciousness (d) Balancing global and local perspectives (e) Global education, experience and exposure.

On the basis of the findings of the present study, Academic Leadership Competency Framework was constructed as illustrated below: -

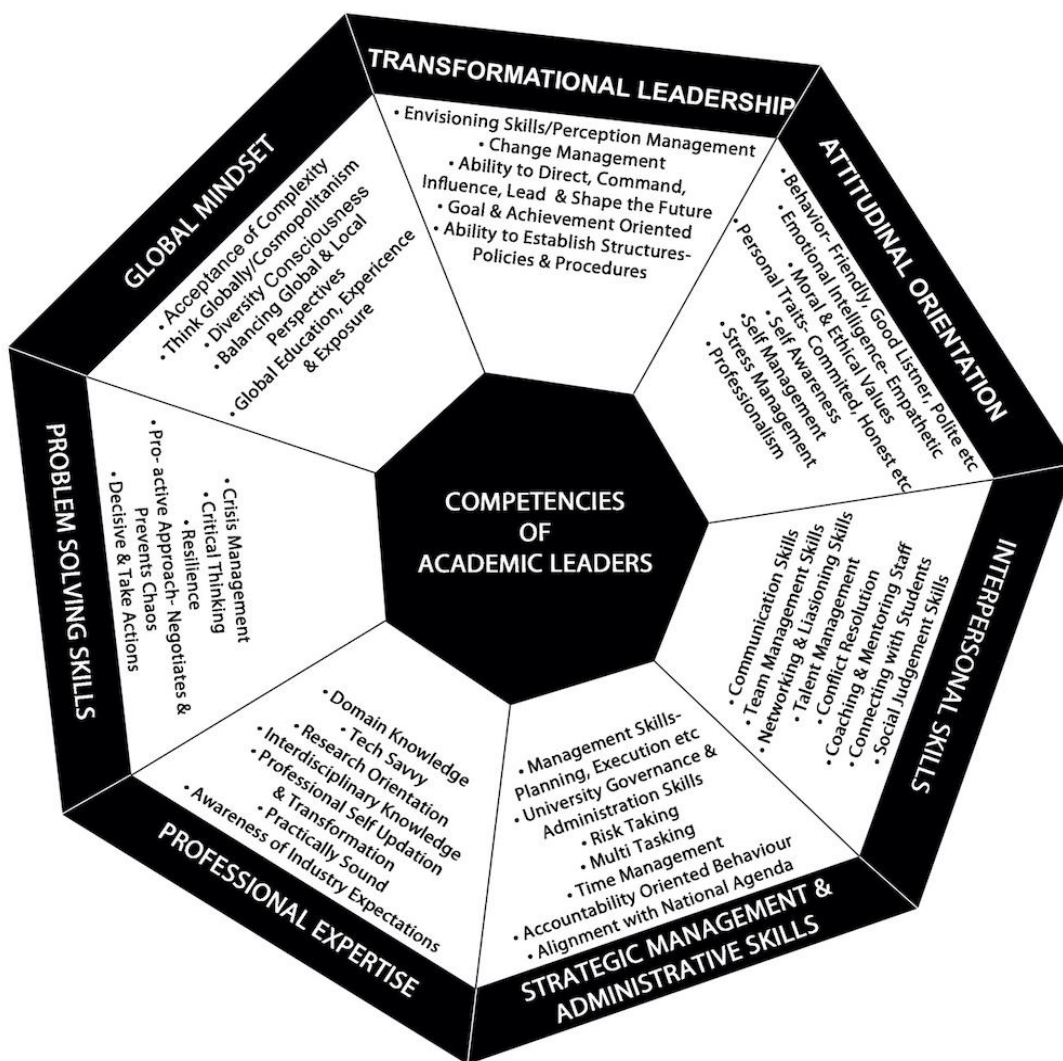


Fig. 1: Academic Leadership Competency Framework

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Following the analysis done on the competencies of leaders like presidents of community colleges, Deans and HODs, senior leaders, academic administrators, etc. of Higher Educational Institutions, the current study sought to understand the research gap in

these studies (Spendlove, 2007; Nan, 2006; McNair et al., 2011; McNair & Benerd, 2009; Townsend & Moyo, 2014; Hammons & Keller, 2015; Shahmandi et al., 2011; Smith & Wolverton, 2015; McDaniel, 2002). However, several previously identified domains are pointing towards few aspects of competencies like leadership context, leadership content, leadership processes and leadership communication. Similarly, the study by Spendlove, (2007) provides a larger picture than McDaniel's content and categorized the competencies into three main groups- attitude, knowledge and behavior. Study done on Leaders of community colleges brought out competencies like organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, professionalism, inquiry and able to take action (Nan, 2006; McNair, Duree, & Ebbers 2011; McNair & Benerd, 2009) Competencies for Presidents of community colleges were categorized into leadership, group related and personal characteristics. (Hammon & Keller, 2015).

Later when HELC framework by McDaniel was qualitatively redefined by Smith & Wolverton (2015) it added few more aspects like analytical approach, Communication skills, look after the student affairs, possess behavioral qualities and maintain external relations but still it failed to throw light on competencies like having a global mindset, to align with national agendas, accountability oriented behavior, interdisciplinary knowledge and multi-tasking aspects. The current findings indicate these gaps.

Academic Leadership Competency Framework (ALCF) was constructed with the Grounded theory approach on the basis of qualitative data analysis synchronizing the perception of academic leaders, faculty members, administrative staff and students regarding the competencies critical for the success of academic leadership role in Higher Education Institutions. Seven key competencies identified in the form of ALCF include (1) Strategic management and administrative skills (2) Professional expertise (3) Problem solving skills (4) Global mindset (5) Transformational Leadership (6) Attitudinal Orientation and (7) Interpersonal skills

Paralleled with previous research, this study unveils novel data on academic leadership competencies. Also, this framework shall serve a base for competency-based selection of academic leaders as solicited by National Education Policy, 2020. It shall also serve as a foundation for construction of Management Development Program curriculum for the leaders of Higher Education Institutions.

Previous studies pertaining to identification of competencies required for the selection and developmental needs of the academic leaders in HEIs are sparse. The present study developed an academic leadership competency framework to accommodate the selection and developmental needs of the academic leaders in HEIs. The evidence in this research suggests that there is need for raising the bar w.r.t quality of higher education by benchmarking global standards. National Education Policy (2020), issued by Ministry of Education, Government of India candidly states that suboptimal governance and leadership of Higher Education Institutions is a major challenge. The policy vividly recommends that selection of academic leaders shall be carried out by the Board of Governors through a rigorous, impartial, merit-based, and competency-based process (Ministry of Education, GOI, 2020). Hollenbeck et al. (2006) suggests the HEIs to identify 5-10 roles of academic leaders and accordingly define the competencies. Spendlove (2007) emphasized that the HEIs should not borrow models from business organizations but researchers should use grounded approach to build comprehensive new models for leadership in higher education. Hence the present study constructed Academic Leadership Competency Framework (ALCF) using grounded theory approach. ALCF identifies seven competencies namely (1) Strategic management and administrative skills (2) Professional expertise (3) Problem solving skills (4) Global mindset (5) Transformational Leadership (6) Attitudinal Orientation and (7) Interpersonal skills critical for the success of academic leadership role in HEIs. This

framework shall be instrumental in selection of academic leaders and shall serve as a foundation for construction of Management Development Program curriculum for the leaders of Higher Education Institutions.

6. Further research-

The present study concentrates on qualitative approach and the ALCF has been constructed on the basis of qualitative data, hence further research to confirm the model through quantitative approach may be conducted. Further studies may be executed by considering academic leaders at two levels namely departmental and institutional as the competencies required to lead a department may vary w.r.t. those required to lead an institution. Moreover, the competencies can be ranked as per their significance for each category separately. Academic Leadership Competency scorecards can be further constructed for identification of developmental needs of the academic leaders in HEIs.

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