



EDUCATIONAL AND ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP; ASSESSING THE PERCEPTION OF POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL SUPERVISORS ABOUT EDUCATIONAL AND ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP.

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ABSTRACT... Objectives: The aim of this study was to document the perception of postgraduate medical supervisors about the importance of effective educational/ academic leadership in promoting educational progress. **Place and Duration of Study:** Army Medical College and public sector medical institutes from May 2017 to November 2017. **Study Design:** Descriptive Cross-sectional. **Subject and Methods:** Open ended questionnaire data was collected from the 32 medical supervisors of postgraduate courses from both basic and clinical disciplines inducted in the study by convenient purposive sampling after taking informed written consent. The approval of the ethical committee constituted at Army Medical College, was officially taken. The supervisors were purposely divided into two groups. Group A (n=11) consisted of senior supervisors of more than five years of experience of supervision out of which 6 were from basic medical sciences and 5 were from clinical medicine. Group B (n=21) consisted of fresh supervisors out of which 6 were from basic medical sciences and 15 were from clinical medicine. It comprises of two phases First phase (survey questionnaire) spanned from May 2017 to November 2017. Second phase in process comprises of selective interviews of the supervisors. Qualitative thematic analysis of all the questions was done while one question was analyzed by quantitative analysis. **Results:** Experienced supervisors thought strong academic knowledge as key quality with good communication skills and continuous motivation for the leaders. They expressed that ineffective leadership can hamper the learning progress and demotivate the trainers. According to fresh supervisors academic training of trainees along with collaboration with other members is a milestone to be achieved and ineffective leadership results in many malpractices. None of the participants thought themselves as aggressive but claimed as assertive, supportive and very adaptive. They considered maintaining healthy relationship with students helps in constructive feedback. **Conclusion:** Strong academic knowledge with good communication skills and continuous motivation for the leaders was identified as a pivotal component for imparting quality education in the institution. Ineffective leadership was identified to result in hampering the learning process, demotivating trainers and malpractices. Maintenance of healthy relationship between trainer and student helped in constructive feedback.

Key words: Academic Leadership, Education, Rolemodel, Supervisors.

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INTRODUCTION

Supporting and impeding progress and change in healthcare organizations depends not only on administration but also on the level of commitment of academicians in the process.¹ The presence of effective supervisor as leaders is a vital variable in the effective implementation of leadership.

Most important is the existence of clinical champions who are willing to lead by example.

This is constant with global mark that supervisors support is critical for effective change implementation in training.²

Leadership has been made central to the promotion and enactment of current educational activities.³

Research supports the standing of effective educational/ academic leadership in promoting

educational development. However, the factors that give rise to academic leadership are under-explored.⁴ Literature can be searched in the context of change, leadership, curricular change, educational leadership and attributes of a team participant. Medical education is still in its infancy and most institutions are still short of trained staff. The 'change leader's capabilities' have a major role in success or failure of the project, and on the extent of potential unwanted side-effects.⁵

To supervise trainees one should be able to lead them and have them understand doing things. This is based on personal qualities charisma and numerous other leadership merits. The supervisor works in situations which involve authority, leadership, meeting goals and encounters.⁶ The effective supervisor has to be able to responsive stability and self-control so that they may face various situations assuredly and efficaciously. Supervisor must have the ability to come up with fresh reactions to circumstances. Mental agility, learning habits and self-knowledge are some of the important attributes to learn by the supervisors to become good leaders. It is necessary for the change agents/supervisors to win the support and commitment of the team members. Supervisors use leadership gears like talents and qualities to teach others to do their work and to shadow their prime and their resolutions.⁷

This study was design to identify those factors leading to acceptance relying extensively on high competency as well as soft skills, including communication skills, the ability to understand and to take into consideration the beliefs and reservations of others.

PARTICIPANTS AND METHODS

This descriptive Cross-sectional study was done at Army Medical College and 12 public sector medical institutes from May 2017 to November 2017. Through non-probability convenience sampling (purposive sampling technique) 31 supervisors were purposely divided into two groups. Group A consisted of experienced supervisors of more than 5 years' experience in different specialties. Group B consisted of fresh supervisors of less than five years of experience

of supervision in different specialties. The groups were of mixed type i.e. consisted of both male and female supervisors. In group A out of total 11 supervisors 7 were female and 4 were male. This group contained 6 supervisors from basic medical sciences and 5 supervisors from clinical medicine. In group B out of total 21 supervisors 13 were female and 8 were male. This group contained 6 supervisors from basic medical sciences and 15 from clinical medicine. Age group of all the participants was 40-60 years. Any chance of participant bias was eliminated by clearly explaining to all participants the objective of the study while obtaining their informed consent. The due approval of the ethical committee constituted at Army Medical College, was officially taken before commencement of the study. It comprises of two phases First phase (survey questionnaire) spanned from May 2017 to November 2017. Second phase in process comprises of selective interviews of the supervisors.

The data was collected on the questionnaire with the aim to explore their perceptions about effective educational/ academic leadership.

Following are the modified questions taken from the CPSP supervisory skills workshop material.

1. What is your understanding of effective educational/ academic leadership?
2. How has ineffective management in your work place harmed educational progress?
3. How has effective leadership in your work place improved educational progress?
4. How would you describe yourself as a leader?
5. Would you characterize yourself as dynamic or creative? Aggressive or assertive? Supportive or adaptive?

Qualitative thematic analysis was done. Triangulation of themes and trends were done with their respective frequency of quotes to confirm accuracy of information presented to the readers.

Frequencies among the two groups after the analysis of question 5 was quantified and professional qualities reflected by the supervisors were documented.

RESULTS

The responses of the supervisors were analyzed by thematic analysis. It has been ensured that

personal bias of the author does not influence the analysis. Table-I and II

	Themes	Trends in experienced supervisors (expert level)	Trends in fresh supervisors (pre-expert level)
1.	Role models	1.1: Sound knowledge Regular efforts to update curriculum	1.1: Demand of students & build their confidence
		1.2: Good communication skills Developmental Motivation Leadership resides in individuals	1.2: Future leaders Connective Awareness Leadership is a property of collective systems
2.	Personal virtues and reasons	2.1: It hampers student learning process	2.1: Restricts the creativity of supervisors
		2.2: It promotes over pampering of students and lenient attitudes of faculty	2.2: Promotes the culture of favouritism, cheating within peers
3.	Training	3.1: Plays pivotal role in imparting quality education in the institution	3.1: Promotes innovative practices Foundational Practice
		3.2: Creates healthy and conducive working environment	3.2: Promotes knowledge sharing culture
4.	Professional profile	4.1: Maintains discipline and makes everyone follow the rules Command and control	4.1: Democratic qualities Power can be 'gained through giving'
		4.2: A guide for UG and PG students	4.2: Interactive and encouraging attitude towards students
5.	Accountability	5.1: Through colleagues and student feedback	5.1: By measuring work progress and performance of PGs
		5.2: Through academic performance of students	5.2: Feedback of seniors and colleagues

Table-I. Thematic analysis of data

	Experienced supervisors n=11	Fresh supervisors n=21
No of participants who characterize themselves as creative	02	05
No of participants who characterize themselves as dynamic	02	09
No of participants who characterize themselves as both	03	05
No of participants who didn't answer the question	04	02
	Experienced supervisors n=11	Fresh supervisors n=21
No of participants who characterize themselves as aggressive	00	00
No of participants who characterize themselves as assertive	07	12
No of participants who characterize themselves as both	00	01
No of participants who didn't answer the question	04	08
	Experienced supervisors n=11	Fresh supervisors n=21
No of participants who characterize themselves as supportive	03	10
No of participants who characterize themselves as adaptive	01	01
No of participants who characterize themselves as both	06	07
No of participants who didn't answer the question	01	03

Table-II. Frequencies of professional qualities reflected by the supervisors

The first question was designed to evaluate the understanding of effective education and academic leadership among experienced and fresh supervisors. Among experienced supervisors everyone had different concept of effective education and academic leadership but most of the experienced supervisors had a point of view that strong academic knowledge of supervisors, knowing all the requirements of the program, improving the curriculum and changes in educational policy are important. While a small number of them had a point that good communication skills of supervisors and continuous motivation help supervisors in achieving their goals in producing leaders of the future. Professional development for instructors is a continuous process that stretches from novice experiences to the end of a professional life. The same question was asked from the fresh supervisors who had a lot of work experience and now were going to supervise students of their subjects. Their responses were versatile and most of them considered dynamic approach towards students as important part of grooming of students. Most of them laid emphasis on understanding the demands of students, promoting them, enhancing their skills and enabling them to be a leader in their field. They thought academic training was important but their mental growth and to work as a team in collaboration with other members is a milestone to be achieved during their training.

In response to the second question asked, the experienced supervisors responded by mentioning that ineffective leadership is harmful when it can not only hamper the student learning progress but also demotivates the teachers. This culture of ineffective leadership promotes over pampering of students and lenient attitudes of faculty which hurts the productivity of the institute. On the other hand, the fresh supervisors had quite diverse responses to this question. According to them ineffective leadership results in many malpractices including favoritism, cheating within peers and irrelevant comparisons amongst themselves. They observed that such practices also restrict the creativity of the supervisors and hence limit their ability to introduce innovative

methods of teaching and mentoring.

Whereas, inquiring about the role of effective leadership at the workplace resulted in interesting replies from both senior and fresh supervisors. Senior supervisors narrated that effective leadership in the workplace plays a pivotal role in imparting quality education in the institution. According to them it results in a healthy working environment with reduced or no conflicts as well as balanced work distribution amongst peers. They mentioned that this practice promotes the sense of ownership between the team members and hence increase the productivity as well as quality of the educational program.

Relatively similar response was recorded from fresh supervisors. They emphasized that leading from the front with an example creates a very positive impact in the workplace. This not only promotes innovative practices but also keeps the faculty motivated and productive. In some examples, it can also be helpful to promote research culture in the workplace as well as cooperative culture amongst peers. According to them effective leadership ensures knowledge sharing culture and hence provides better learning opportunities for the faculty and hence a humongous knowledge resource for students.

The next part of research was analysis of oneself as a leader. How he defines himself as a leader and what qualities does he think are important in being an effective leader. Experienced supervisors defined themselves as a ruler of the department and a guide for their students. According to them making everyone follow the rules and maintaining discipline is their important duty which helps the students in a long run to make them better professionals while fresh supervisors considered dynamic personality and democratic qualities as cardinal traits of being a leader.

Participants were given options to express the professional qualities they think they had as a leader.

Towards the end, the participants of research were asked as to how they actually act the way

they describe to. A mix response to this query has been observed. Interestingly both experienced as well as fresh supervisors share similar opinions. According to them the best way to evaluate whether they are acting according to their belief is to gather and digest the feedback presented by their under graduate and post graduate students as well as from their colleagues. Some of them believe that maintaining healthy relationship with students will also help receive constructive criticism.

DISCUSSION

The quality of any training depends on a number of aspects out of which the excellence of supervisors and that of assessment are indispensable.⁸

All the team members have to be treated as adult learners and should be made to recognize the relevance and application of the different aspects in order for them to be useful contributors to the revision process.⁹ Researchers gratified that students' performance (academic performance) plays an important role in producing the best quality progresses that will become great leaders.¹⁰

Attention on supervision has only being on teaching and learning in Basic Schools (Anderson & Donkor, 2016)¹¹; discipline in Senior High Schools (Sackey, Amaniampong & Abrokwa, 2016).¹² Azure (2016, p.163)¹³ also looked at the "elements of effective supervision from Ghanaian graduate students' perspective" and found no significant difference between effective supervision and gender. These findings run steadily with our findings.

This step would be extremely important because if at this stage the medical educationists fail to win the trust of the team members, the whole exercise would be jeopardized and the revision process may still complete, but with great risk of resulting in a product that would be a scientific disaster.¹⁴ It will be important that all the team members come up with their suggestions and a second meeting may be planned to discuss and ultimately reach a consensus about the changes.¹⁵

In any discipline, especially in the medicine, professionals are not educated during their institute incorporates in a number of skills.

These skills are not directly related to the field of expertise of the supervisor.

However, for successful supervision of training, a trainer must be proficient at the innumerable of characters that need to be performed as a leader¹⁶ Supervisors should have prospects to develop understanding of how students with varied interests, aptitudes, and practices create logic of teachings and what a supervisor does to provide and monitor. Supervisors require the opportunity to study and engage in research on teaching and learning, and to part with associates what they have learned.

The leaders create short-term wins and build up momentum as people try to fulfill the vision, while fewer and fewer resist change. Don't let-up a s people make wave after wave of changes until the vision is fulfilled. The supervisors as change into leaders they make change stick and fresh and winning behavior continues despite the pull of tradition.¹⁷ Effective supervision requires well trained personnel with knowledge, interpersonal skills, and technical skills that are prepared to provide the necessary and appropriate guidance and support to the teaching staff. Experienced supervisors in our study also thought strong academic knowledge as key quality with good communication skills and continuous motivation for the leaders. According to fresh supervisors academic training of trainees along with collaboration with other members is a milestone.

In our study none of the participants thought themselves as aggressive but claimed as assertive, supportive and very adaptive. They considered maintaining healthy relationship with students will help in constructive feedback. Effective supervision should result in growth and learning by the teacher (Duke, 1993).¹⁸ Supervision has a different essence. The relationship is more long term, with a general responsibility of helping the trainee's professional career. The role of a supervisor is to provide the trainee with a vision

into a different or fresh environment, to develop connections and build in doors.¹⁹ Supervision is often used to enable to understand more about the culture and the way things are done, to give access to networks and the opportunity to experience situations outside their day-to-day work.²⁰

And, as with coaching, open-minded supervisors find they learn almost as much as the trainees.

Successful change starts by building the guiding team as people start telling each other 'let's go, we need to change things', they get the vision right and the guiding team develops the right vision and strategy for the change effort. Communication for buy-in People begin to buy into the change and are reflected in their behavior. Empower action starts when more people feel able to act and do act on the vision.²¹

CONCLUSION

Strong academic knowledge with good communication skills and continuous motivation for the leaders was identified as a pivotal component for imparting quality education in the institution. Ineffective leadership was identified to result in hampering the learning process, demotivating trainers and malpractices. Maintenance of healthy relationship between trainer and student helped in constructive feedback.

Study limitations

There are certain limitations in the present study as it was a descriptive study. A longitudinal study would be more suited to see the relationship between the adopted approaches of the supervisors.

Conflict of Interest

Nothing to be declared by any author.

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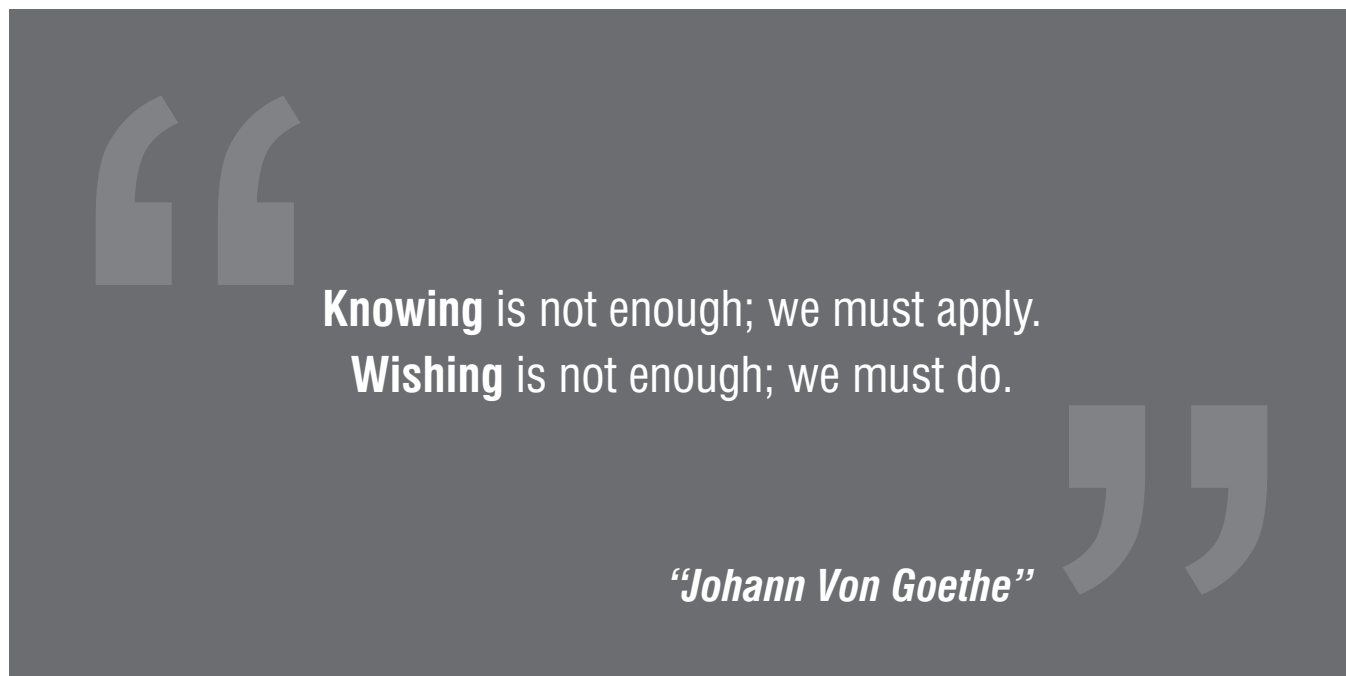
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3	Sana Ahmed Khan	Data collection.	<i>Sana Ahmed Khan</i>
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