

Exploring the Perception and Observation of Youth on Leadership Towards Sustainable Development: A Case Study of Dhaka City, Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

The youth across the globe has reached a remarkable 1.8 billion out of 7.3 billion, and most of them live in developing countries like Bangladesh. Some 47.6 million or 30% of the total 158.5 million people in Bangladesh are youths, and it will be between 10% and 19% by 2050. This means that Bangladesh needs to invest right now in the human capital of its youths if it wants to reap the benefits of a large demographic dividend. Considering the facts, it is urgent to invest heavily on them for their quality education and effective leadership for economic, environmental, and social gains. Based on understanding the importance of the youth, this study explores the perception of youth in Dhaka city about leadership, their needs for developing their leadership capacity, and focuses on their key priorities that they want to work on. The researcher hopes that the findings of this study would have important implications for youth-related policies and programmes. It would also assist the planners, policymakers, implementers, and stakeholders towards adopting more effective strategies for the leadership development of youths in Bangladesh.

KEYWORDS

Bangladesh, Dhaka, Leadership, Perceptions, Youth

INTRODUCTION

It is society's job to prioritize and invest in the building of capacity in young people now, so they can be effective leaders when they reach adulthood (Fertman & van Linden, 1999). There is lot for young people to synthesize on their journeys to adulthood. As well as the physical, emotional and moral developmental experiences of typical adolescence across time, for 21st century youth there are new intellectual, social, technological, and environmental implications for their engagement as effective and influential citizens both locally, and globally. The world is evolving and becoming increasingly complex in terms of technological development, culturally diverse populations, environmental challenges and global interconnectedness (Bolstad & Gilbert, 2012).

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There is much discussion about what kinds of learning and thinking will be required in the 21st century. Academics in future-focused education such as Robinson (2010), Gilbert (2005) and Bolstad (2012) have identified the many skills seen as necessary to build in today's youth. These include: problem-solving, creative and critical thinking, design and collaborative skills, and also the development of environmental, ethical and cultural awareness. Consequently, the way educators think and act must also develop to meet 21st century learners' demands effectively. Developmental psychologist Howard Gardner spoke in 2008 of his "Five Minds for the Future" as being; the disciplined, the synthesizing, the creative, the respectful and the ethical mind. He purports that practitioners need to do more than assist youth to become experts at something, they need to assist them to grow a conscience and an awareness of who and how they are in the world, and how what they do can impact on others.

Prioritizing social justice principles through teaching social and environmental literacies that nurture the moral, ethical and civic responsibility and capacity in young people is being seen by future focused educators as crucial (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, & Cammack, 2004). Many of the capacities mentioned above are also reflected in literature discussing key leadership characteristics required by youth in the 21st century. Aspects that are increasingly being identified as crucial leadership competencies for effectiveness include concepts of self-awareness, social intelligence, and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006). Karnes and Chauvin (2005) also note that because of the increasing multicultural aspects of our society, future leaders must respect and positively interact with diverse populations and as a matter of social justice, will need to encourage and foster the participation of all groups while demonstrating humility and respect for others. As such, the relational nature of leadership is of paramount importance (Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, & Mainella, 2006).

Youth are the largest and perhaps the most critical demographic in Bangladesh today. The youth constitute one third of total population in Bangladesh. For this important portion of population, determination of national outlook is undeniable. Bangladesh youth policy has acknowledged the importance of youths for Bangladesh's economic, political, and social well-being (BRAC, 2015).

The youth are the most strong, self-confident, creative and productive guiding force of any nation. It is possible to reflect hopes & aspirations of a nation through the youth. The endless potential of the youth shall be utilized for their own, for the society and for the nation. Development of a nation is totally dependent on the spirit & urge of work of the youth. For this, it is evident to explore and utilize all the potentialities of them (Mansuri et al. 2004). To ensure favorable environment towards productive practical education, training and self-employment for the youth and bringing out all dormant potentialities including their leadership quality aiming at Bangladesh's progress. The main objective of the present national Youth Policy of Bangladesh is to create disciplined and efficient work force having responsibility of good citizen and creative mentality with a view to involving the youth in the national development stream also having respect towards national heritage and culture through a planned process (Sahel, F, 2010). On the basis of above views, this study tries to understand and explore the perception of youth in Dhaka city about leadership, their needs for developing their leadership capacity and focus on their key priorities that they want to work on.

METHODOLOGY

There has been much research into and around adult conceptions and experiences of leadership and its impact on both individuals and organizations (Heifetz & Linsky 2015, Camini, L 2013, Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach 2011). What has not been investigated as fully, is youth leadership and the contexts within which young people's leadership experiences and emerging understandings are developed (Dempster, Lizzio, Keefe, Skinner, & Andrews, 2016).

This research provided scope to explore young people's perceptions of leadership and their own leadership practices. Most opportunities for youth leadership are centered within educational contexts with traditional and hierarchical structures (Archard, 2011; Conner & Strobel, 2017; McNae, 2015).

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