



On Relation between Capability and Leadership of College Students: Based on “Able Person” Hypothesis

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Abstract

It is of necessity for institutions of higher education, given “ability-oriented” education idea to embody the concept of putting ability first and promote the leadership advancement of college students in developing themselves and the entire society with the starting point of capability. Leadership of college students showcases their capability and demonstrates as a collection of able quality and this ability meets the need of modern society for college students to shoulder their social responsibilities, besides, leadership also consists of ability quality for college students to achieve their own development. Therefore, this paper strives to construct further the relationship of capability and leadership of college students following clarifying the relation of capability and leadership.

Key words: College students; Capabilities; Leadership of college students

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INTRODUCTION

“Against the context of knowledge-based economy, hypothesis about human nature has to take man’s

ability into consideration and ensure it an inevitable option in this era.” (Qi, 2003) As a hypothesis about human nature, able-person hypothesis focuses on the management concept and involves into “give priority to ability” from “put people first”. Hypothesis about human nature regards man’s ability as its core so that talent cultivation and management notion in this knowledge-based economy should persist in giving priority to the ability. Taking in form of knowledge and information, products of knowledge economy only have to rely on this very vehicle—A man to maintain vigor and vitality. When man is engaged in learning, mastering, employing and innovating knowledge, they can be able to turn knowledge into capability so that man’s ability grows to be an essential factor in knowledge economy competition. The more man’s ability can be given play means the more man can master, employment and innovate knowledge. Furthermore, internal ability of man and external environment joins hands to exert dual influence on elaborating man’s ability. Then the question remains that how to give free rein to man’s capability integrating and leading inner and outer conditions? Key to this question can be discovered in man’s ability of integration and leading that integrating inner and outer conditions as well as leading relevant capabilities are required to bolster the function and improvement of man’s ability in concert. Such ability of integrating and leading can be interpreted as leadership and man’s leadership commands other capabilities and possesses the core status in the set of man’s capability.

1. CLARIFICATION OF RELATION BETWEEN CAPABILITY AND LEADERSHIP

Any related thought of the two key words—capability and leadership will result into the ensuing questions: Is

leadership capability? If so, what kind of capability is it? What is the relation between the two? This paper attempts to clarify such connection and illustrate further confusion and misunderstanding of this relation.

1.1 Settlement of Their Relation: Leadership Is Capability

"It is easy to identify leadership in specific environment while it is difficult to define precisely." (Antonakis, Cianciolo, & Sternberg, 2007) It can be ascribed to the complexity and confusion of leadership itself and consequently definition of leadership can easily lead into error zone. Therefore, it is important to seek common ground of features of leadership showcased by distinct phenomenon in different situation and learn the idea of leadership based on the shared fundamental property of leadership. The question that "Is leadership capability?" can not be taken easily. If the answer is "yes", then evidence is called to prove this point, if the answer is "no", arguments are needed to hit back this proposition. In order to argue it, first and foremost, "leadership" is supposed to be set as a clue so that one can seek clues in a complicated situation of various notions defined by scholars at home and abroad, secondly, efforts should be made to remove limits of conditions for ideas by analyzing and comparing varying ideas of leadership and to find basic understandings.

Notions defined by scholars at home and abroad come into existence regarding ever-involving leadership theories. Accordingly, notions of leadership reflect styles and characteristics of leadership theories in different times. Looking into documents and literature of leadership at home and abroad, one can find that most of them emphasize on individual leaders in certain organization. Such amount of literature researches probe into features of leadership, namely, special qualities, behaviors, situations, for identifying the idea of leadership. With the switches of study paradigms of leadership, researches on leadership cast their eyesight on the relation of leaders and their followers instead of individual leaders. Thorough pondering upon these leader theories will bring about the fact that most theorists actually paraphrase the same object in slightly distinct ways and the discrepancy only rests with different perspectives of research. In addition, only by giving play to man's ability can be one accentuate leadership no matter how one defines leadership according to its traits, behaviors, relations or situations. Foreign scholars understand leadership from the following three points of view: Firstly, "leadership is influence" (John, 2003); secondly, "leadership means the capabilities how leaders motivate others voluntarily make excellent contributions in the organization." (Li, 2011); thirdly, "leadership is the ability to change visions into realities." (Li, 2011) Based on statements above, it can be found that the core factor is ability to be it is the capacity to influence, motivate others or bring about visions.

Chinese researches have not yet reached agreements and there are seven types of definition in general: "theory of resultants", "theory of system of forces", "theory of influence", "theory of motivation", "two-level theory", "responding theory" and "function theory". One can find after looking into these ideas that resultants, systems of forces and ability functions are comprised of multiple capabilities while influences, motivating ability, individual and group capability and strain capacity only serve to demonstrate capability in distinct ways. Besides, there is a conspicuous feature of Chinese scholars in understanding leadership that they pay adequate attention to the study of what composes leadership, for instance, "five-power model of leadership", "six-dimension leadership", seven essential factors for leadership, multiple key elements of leadership, just to name a few. When it comes to the analysis of leadership structure, there is a highlight on the significance of "virtue ethics leadership" or virtue ethics leadership and this is the very distinction between domestic and foreign research. Although there are varied environments, processes and consequences for leadership, identification of leadership is supposed to meet the standard of how much abilities can be manifest and function. There is no need to question, therefore, the idea that "leadership is capable".

1.2 Clarification of Their Relation: Leadership Does Not Equate With Leading Capability

As it mentioned above, leadership is capability, yet the definition of leadership is not equal to that of leading capability completely. To begin with, the two concepts "force" and "capability" have their respective connotations that differentiate them from each other. From the point of physicals, a force is any interaction which an object exerts upon another object and it consists of magnitude, direction and acting point of force. Then, it can be said that force can not exist alone in isolation from objects, the interplay of which exactly demonstrate the existence of force. As for the "interaction", it is about an abstract summary of some concrete actions such as push, pull, lift, hoist, press and so on. Therefore, by means of more than two objects as media, the interaction of these medium then generates force. Since force comes into being in this way, then the logical relation of objects leads to the force giver and the force receiver. That is to say, forces act in a particular direction and have sizes dependent upon how strong the push or pull is, so the magnitude of force is decided by the object itself, the force giver and the force receiver and acting point of force means the point where the force giver and the force receiver contact or support each other. Modern Chinese Dictionary explains forces in this way: "A force is any interaction which tends to change the motion and shape of an object. In other words, a force can cause an object with mass to change its velocity and shape" (Institute of the Chinese Academy of sciences language, para. 2, 2002, p.775). As a result, force brings about two

changes: The first one is changes of the motion of an object and the second point is the changes of shape of the object. To put it this way, force can be regarded as an action that this interaction of objects follow these changes. What is more, force is interactive so that an object gives force to another and vice versa. According to this understanding of force, leadership then can be illustrated as the interplay of leading subject and leading object and the former can function to guide the latter to advance in a given direction while the two are interacting with one and another.

Psychology defines “capability” as “personal mental traits that have direct influence on man’s activity efficiency for a successful completion of task” (Zheng, 2002). First and foremost, capability is man’s mental traits, secondly, capability enjoys a close relation with activities involving man and only amid activities can capability come to showcase and function. Thirdly, as a personal mental, capability can directly decide whether an action can accomplish. According to Modern Chinese Dictionary, “capability” is about “the subject condition necessary for certain assignment” (Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences Language, para.2, 2002, p.921), “capable” here means the required abilities or some efficiency. By “subject conditions”, it aims man’s mental properties as well as his knowledge resources in store. Henceforth, capabilities competent in certain mission demand more than the capability itself, and various mental characteristics, knowledge and technical ability are also called for. So now the question is what is the connection among capability, knowledge and technical ability? Capability is the prerequisite of mastering knowledge and technical ability so that man can not understand and grasp knowledge to acquire technical ability until he is equipped with some abilities. Capabilities are demonstrated in employing knowledge and technical ability, based on which the capability can advance. However, it is of importance for mental quality, knowledge and technical ability to join hands to bring about a successful ending to a task or an activity. Therefore, psychological features mean the explanation of capability within while knowledge and technical ability extend the denotation of capability. From the point of psychology understanding of capability, leading capability is about the personal mental characteristics manifested when leading subject proves equal to the leading mission for a smooth conclusion of leading activity. By the type of capability, leading capacity is a special ability that consists of leading knowledge, technical ability and psychological quality, nevertheless, special ability of this kind must integrate into general capabilities so as to guarantee a successful processing for leading activities.

To sum it up, leadership should be separated from leading capability and they share similarities as well as possess differences. Leadership pays more attention to the interplay between the force giver and the force receiver. Furthermore, it can be only identified and evaluated by

this function effect. When it comes to leading capability, it highlights the leading knowledge, technical ability and psychological quality as well as other comprehensive qualities of the leading subject itself. Leading capability is the inner preparation for leadership and leadership manifests the leading capability. Man with leading capability may not necessarily possess leadership; on the contrary, man’s of leadership is sure to command leading capability. Accordingly, the settlement of their respective connotations and clarification of their relation lays a foundation to constitute the connection of capability and leadership of college students.

2. CONSTRUCTION OF RELATION BETWEEN CAPABILITY AND LEADSHIP OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

2.1 Understanding of Relation Between Capability and Leadership of College Students

Capability is always associated with man’s practice action while man’s mental characteristics can be manifest by accomplishing some activity or in reply to dynamic norms, qualities and effects of the given mission. College students’ capability is the individual mental traits that college students can successfully accomplish study and work assignment as well as participate activities like social practices. These traits have a direct influence on the efficiency for college students to finish various practices, the complication and multi-dimension of which then demands that man engaging on practice ought to own varied capability structure in response to the complicated and ever-changing practice action with many levels of ability structure. Then it can be found that capability structure presents the shape of pyramid from below with intellectual power level as the first floor, technical ability level of the second and virtue ethics level the third, as it shown in Figure 1:

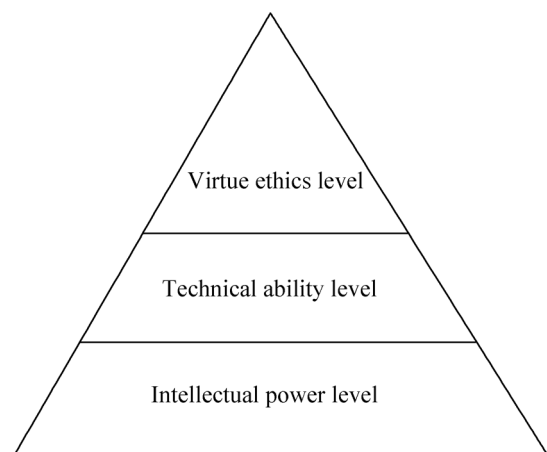


Figure 1
Arrangement of Capability Structure

Understanding of college students' leadership abiding by the definition of leadership will result into a conclusion of the shared properties together with the personalities. To begin with, college students' leadership is different from leadership of leaders in a given organization in that the former is free from leadership in formal organizations despite of the fact that college students as individuals are living in group or community and they are bound to handle with assorted connections. Secondly, based on their organization environment, it can be said that college students are living at school where the free atmosphere can render their study, life and practice a high degree of autonomy so that college students' leadership mainly focuses on the cognition and management of the individual. Thirdly, in terms of college students' responsibilities bestowed by this social identity, college students, as social elites, they have the very responsibilities to advance and lead themselves up with the entire society. Consequently, college students' leadership is committed to the process of relation and virtue ethics that involves positive changes, it then implicates that self-cognition and management builds up foundations for being able to conduct effective communication and intercourse as well as establish a sound relation of interaction so that such positive connection can boost the cultivation of virtue ethics for its future influence.

2.2 College Students' Leadership in Arrangement of Capability Structure

The process of intellectual power level moving to virtue ethics level in arrangement of capability structure proves to be an upgrading one and each level forms a distinct capability structure. Concerning the features of capability structure at different levels, college students' leadership enjoys a responding structure layer, as it shown below:

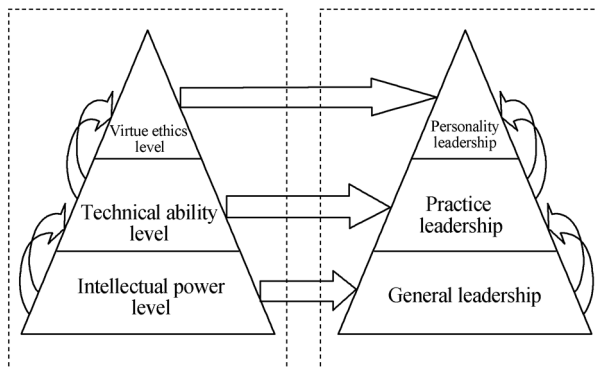


Figure 2
Leadership Layers in Arrangement of Capability Structure

2.2.1 General Leadership in Intellectual Power Level

Despite of the fact that intelligence level remains the first floor in the arrangement of capability structure, it is no more than a static plan in the arrangement of capability structure. Since it is believed that "intellectual power is a multi-layer and multi-sequence dynamic

comprehensive system that consists of intelligence, ability and knowledge" (Ou & Wang, 1998), intellectual power level then is a three-dimensional structure in dynamic state in which intelligence, ability and knowledge are interrelated and mutually influenced. It looks to Jean Piaget that "function of intelligence is a unique way of activity by the standard of Biology." (Wadsworth, 1989) Such unique form is of great avail for the organism to adapt itself constantly to surroundings and organizational experience. With the help of original cognition structure, the organism can attempt to recognize and understand the object environment and readjust itself to it on the basis of constant construction of cognition structure. There would be no development of intelligence without some reserve of knowledge and one has to depend on intelligence to cognize and process for the accumulation of knowledge. To cultivate certain ability, intelligence and knowledge are supposed to interact with each other and there is no such thing as a stable structure of intellectual power without the coordinated development of intelligence, ability and knowledge. The structure of intellectual power boasts a close connection with the functional structure of the brain. The first functional zone of the brain controls man's mental activities such as alertness and attention when the second one mainly deals with cognition, reception and handling of information. Therefore, structure of intellectual power under the charge of the functional structure of the brain concentrates on the cognition level that is constituted by such elements as memory, observation, attention, thinking, ability to handle and process knowledge, imagination and so on. Cognition features shown in structure of intellectual power can be found in leadership structure that presents as general leadership. As for "general", it strengthens the state of basis, precondition and layer. General leadership of cognition attributes chiefly demonstrates the capacity of cognition, analysis, reflection, self-control and decision-making while one in structure of intellectual power can conduct self-management by developing individual cognition so as to lay a cognition foundation for leadership in relation and action.

2.2.2 Practice Leadership in Technical Ability Level

Intellectual power level can ascend to the upper technical ability level, which then implies such a logical linkage that advancement of technical ability should be grounded on the development of intellectual power and the latter provides intelligence support and knowledge reserve for the former. When the subject learns to utilize and transform knowledge to an automatic degree, the technical ability then comes into being. *The Dictionary of Education* defines "technical ability" in this way: "Based on acquired knowledge experience, the subject forms, after times of practice, certain manner of action to carry out tasks. However, what comes out at last after some imitation and practice with the help of basic knowledge turns to

be the technical ability at primary stage while repeated practice on the basis of rich experience and knowledge together with elementary actions up to automatic standard then generates skills.” (Gu, 1990) According to this definition, it can be said that there are two levels for the evolution of technical ability: The first is the primary stage featured by many simple and single operating skill and the second is the automatic level that calls for the engagement of analysis, synthesis, summary, abstraction and other advanced logical thoughts. The feature of operation shown in technical ability level can and only can be honed in practice. The moment man kicks off his practice, he is exposed to assorted connections for sure, namely, person-to-person relation, man-and-animal relation and so on. Henceforth, taken features of operation in technical ability into account, space for growth and development of technical ability proves space of practice with various relations and its functional meanings rest with studying for the sake of application. Being practical and connected, upgrading of technical ability helps leadership in technical ability level display in an air of being practical and interactive so that practice leadership comes into being with the two characteristics. As for the “practice”, it highlights the subject that practices in his or her own person in real situations. This is the so-called “practice means performance”. Then a real environment with college students as its leadership subject practice turns to be such place where leadership can gain free rein made up of family, school and society. Due to its considerate flexibility and freedom of this space, strictly, this environment from the point of organizational behavior can not be regarded as organizational environment. However, given the fact that college students are living in such organizational forms as class, team, department, school, college and community, their regular activities of certain organization are sure to produce organizational goals, socialization aims as well as other targets. As a result, college students’ leadership in technical ability level manifests as the capability of vision motivation, plan, execution, communication, coordination, socialization, solicitude, strain, influence, reform and innovation given organization environment of this kind.

2.2.3 Personality Leadership in Virtue Ethics Level

The highest level of man’s existence turns out to be one of virtue, which also displays the ultimate intelligence of human beings. Virtue ethics existence means the pursuit of morals for man to develop himself and the inbuilt value by which man’s social existence abides. In-growth and extension of virtue ethics are prerequisites for virtue ethics existence. In other words, in-growth of virtue ethics stresses man’s tapping into his own morals while its extension strives for the external impacts exerted by virtue. Inward cultivation and outward exertion are distinct from each other though they both belong to

virtue ethics capacity. So one may ask, what is virtue? And what is virtue ethics capacity? “Virtue” is about staying true to one’s heart and mind and acting honestly to make every move worthy. *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, a Chinese dictionary of words and expressions, holds that “Nature is man’s yangqi and man is born well.” By “nature” it means the usual way that a person behaves that is part of his character and it applies to man’s inbuilt qualities as well as properties of a thing. Therefore virtue ethics can be understood as man’s inborn-quality prescription. Plus, “virtue ethics are the very soul of man’s spirits that instills nobility into man and becomes a ‘starter’ to bring about vitality for man.” (Chen, 2004, p.6) As is indicated, therefore, virtue ethics are the internal mechanism that the subject initiates to launch and such essential spirit can help the subject promote self-regulation, self-creation and achieve self-development. Besides, the saying that “A man of virtue ethics can never be isolated. He is sure to have like-minded companions.” makes it clear that there is no way for virtue ethics to stand alone and it is bound to involve family, country and even the entire society, which then tallies with the so-called “outwardly beneficial to others”. When it refers to “inwardly supportive of oneself” of virtue, it means the ability to cultivate one’s own disposition while “outwardly beneficial to others” strengthens outward-looking capability of influence. Be it the ability to cultivate one’s own disposition or outward-looking capability of influence, it calls for man’s virtue ethics capacity that the practicality of virtue ethics should play an important role here. Concerning the practice object of virtue ethics capacity-man, it is required then that what are the fundamental attributes that make man in the very first place. “Personality is one’s unique properties.” (Chen, 2004, p.109) From the point of Psychology, properties of this kind summarize psychological and physical features of man. Taken Ethics into consideration, then it can be said that man’s ethics and morals are of great importance. Accordingly, the uniqueness of man’s personality constitutes the attributes to make man and it can be shown, to a great extent, through moral and gives full expression to man’s virtue. So what lies between virtue ethics and personality? Virtue ethics are part of personality and keep it stable and lasting. Besides, ration of virtue ethics can take man’s instincts and desires in constraining man’s brutish nature and help him become a rational animal. That is to say, virtue ethics can be a powerful personality.

Based on this connection, leadership in virtue ethics level can be grouped into personality leadership that highlights the impact of personality charm, showcases virtue ethics radiation of words and deeds in personal relation and manifests through interaction the moral guidance of emotions, attitudes and values. Chinese traditional culture talks about “Those who want to establish themselves in society should begin by helping

others to do so; those who want to become prosperous should help others to get rich first." that pays adequate attention to the external influence of man's inner virtue, in other words, man may not be able to establish a stable personality to establish himself or become prosperous until he strives to cultivate his inner building. Against the context of value ration with "virtue" as the very core, college students should nurture their inner accomplishment in a belief of virtue ethics culture to grow morals so that they can move and inspire others with their amiable words and deeds. Henceforth, personality leadership in virtue ethics level consists of belief, moral, affinity, and inspiration.

CONCLUSION

This paper strives to clarify the statements that "leadership is capable" and "leadership does not equate with leading capability" and their relations so as to present a clearer picture of the connection between capability and leadership of college students. Thanks to understandings of capability-leadership relation, it is highly possible to constitute a framework for the connection between capability and leadership of college students and lay a sound foundation to probe and look into leadership of Chinese college students. The structure layer of college students' leadership based on a three level ability on the one hand demonstrates leadership as a collection of capability; on the other hand it also stands for an inward-looking extension of advancement of leadership. It is such a logical thinking pattern to explore college students' leadership to closely examine their connotation, clarify this relation and construct such connection, for sure, it is

bound to a logical starting point from which the model of college students' leadership can be put into construction and operation.

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