Child Leadership

(A Review Article)

Author: Dr. Moses Satralkar

I. Definition Of Concept Of Child Leadership: Laine Burt

Leadership is a strategic resource which is short in supply the world over. All cultures need role models and leaders. Most of us agree that professions such as medicine, technology, education, business and industry, politics, and the arts need people who can use intelligence, creativity, and critical judgment. Thus, the role of parents and educators is critical in assisting with the development of leadership attributes, qualities and skills in children right from an early age.

While wanting your child to be a leader can be a good thing, it's not necessarily the right thing for your child. How can you tell? Do they seem comfortable in large groups of children? Do others respond well to their suggestions? Do they have an interest in setting the direction or style of play their peers participate in? If yes, then maybe they have some natural leadership qualities within them. These can of course be nurtured. If they don't, then that doesn't mean they are destined to be great leaders.

Whoever said "Great leaders are made not born" was on the right track. Taking the initiative, making suggestions, providing direction, being sympathetic to the problems of others are all characteristics that can make great leaders. Fortunately, they are also behaviors that can be encouraged in our children.

II. Few Leadership Traits Identified In Children: Frances A. Karnes and Suzanne M. Bean

Can you pick tomorrow's future leaders out of the bunch? It's not necessarily just the bossy ones you should pick. Think about the real leaders in your daily life, and what qualities they exhibit. Those that lead by example, encourage others to do better, and bring others together to work

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towards a common goal. Those may seem like lofty qualities to find in small children, but if you look closely, you will see some that do exhibit those very qualities. Characteristics identified in small children who possess a high leadership potential are as follows:

- The desire to be challenged.
- The ability to solve problems creatively.
- The ability to reason critically.
- The ability to see new relationships.
- Facility of verbal expression.
- Flexibility in thought and action.
- The ability to tolerate ambiguity.
- The ability to motivate others.

III. Imbibing Leadership Qualities In Children: Esther Andrews

Would you like your child to be a leader? What are the qualities of a leader? Here are some of the qualities required to be a leader, and how you can encourage the development of these qualities in your child by inculcating them during the early years of life.

- Integrity - remember to be a good example, a role model for your child. Parents teach by example, and integrity is a quality kids learn from their parents. Talk with your child about integrity. One tool that is very helpful is story telling. Look for books that tell about the value of integrity. I found an e-book that has several stories that promote values in kids. You can also make up your own stories, which tell about the value of integrity.

- Courage - always praise courage. When your child shows courage, notice it and praise it. Praise courage wherever you see an expression of it. Story telling is also very effective in this case.

- Creative, independent thinking - In order to develop this quality, it is very helpful to ask questions. When you talk with your child about any subject at all, always ask open questions, that encourage creative thinking. Use the "One Step Farther" principle. After you have gotten all the obvious answers, ask one more question, to come up with a deeper, more creative idea. Questions like "Why", "What would happen if...", "How do you think did it feel...", encourage your child to think creatively. Talk to your child, encourage independent thinking.

- Self-belief - One of the most important things you can teach your child is to believe in himself and in his ideas, visions and abilities. The best way you can do this is to encourage him every step of the way, and not to scoff at his goals. When your child tells you that he wants to be the richest man in the world, don't laugh him off as if that is something beyond him. Instead, ask your child what he plans to do to achieve that goal. Let him know that nothing is beyond his capabilities.

A leader is a person who believes in himself. It is only when someone believes in what they are doing, can they convince others to follow the same path. Most children have goals, and a few know just what they are going to do to achieve these goals. Having

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goals is the first step towards leadership - the second step is knowing how you are going to achieve these goals, and if they are feasible at all.

- **Confidence** - this is one of the most important qualities required for success in general. To develop confidence in your child, avoid criticizing your child, praise your child sincerely and often, develop a habit to talk about your child's strengths and achievements with him every day. Remember to make it a point to bring up at least one good quality of your child every day. If you adopt it as a routine, over time it will do wonders for your child. It takes only a few minutes to mention an achievement or strength (a good quality).

Encourage your child; repeat the phrase "you can do it" often.

- **Responsibility** - When something goes wrong, sometimes it makes us feel better if we can blame something else or someone else. A leader takes responsibility. ‘Good leadership is also about knowing when you made a mistake, when you took a wrong decision, and having the ability to admit your mistakes and cancel a course of action. Many people realize that that they may have started things on the wrong track, but keep plodding on since their egos don't allow them to admit their mistakes. Teach your child the importance of realizing when he is wrong, and admitting it. This may be one of the hardest lessons to teach your child, but it is important. Make sure your child knows that he is the "boss" in his life. His success is his responsibility. We are not victims of our environment; we have control over our life. Teach your child to "come from a place of power". When your child blames someone else or something else for a mishap, or comes up with excuses, you have an opportunity to encourage your child to assume responsibility. Make sure that your child knows that it is OK to make mistakes. Mistakes are an opportunity to learn. You can help your child draw conclusions, without 'making him wrong,' by asking: "What did you learn from this?", "What do you think went wrong?", "Why do you think this happened?", "How could you avoid this?" and again, "What do you think would happen if...?" Your child should understand that he has no control over other people, and is not expected to have control over other people's actions, but he has full control over his own reaction. This will give your child the feeling of power, as opposed to 'being a victim.'

- **Planning** - Many children dream big, but they don't plan on how they will be able to achieve their goals. Teach your child the importance of planning their lives. They can change their plans along the way, but it is best if they follow a path. No one has to lay down the path for them - let them plan their own paths - but it is essential that they have something concrete in mind, or they will simply drift along with the tide. Some people don't make any plans; they simply wait and see what life has to offer and follow any direction that may seem convenient for the moment. Few of these people may get lucky, but they are in the minority. The best leaders are those that chart a course of action in advance, and stick to it.

### IV. Inculcating Leadership Skills In Children: Richard Gorham

- **Setting and Example** - “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you” Is a golden rule is also one of the most important leadership skills for kids. Kids need to appreciate and respect others who may see things differently than they do. Setting an example is the best way to teach children.

- **Communication** - Encouraging children to effectively communicate with others is a critical part of their leadership development. Make the key point that everyone is given two ears and only one mouth so they might listen twice as much as they speak! Listening effectively is key to good communication.

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Collaboration/Teamwork - Working well with others is another highly important skill for kids. Getting more accomplished as a team in less time, rather than simply going it alone, is a key learning for kids.

The social aspects of teamwork are equally important. Children who are shielded or overprotected by parents can be handicapped when it comes down to social situations. Kids must learn firsthand how to get along in the world with a diverse group of opinionated individuals. This can be accomplished through group activities, games etc.

Negotiation/Compromising - Through the process of working in teams, kids learn the art of give and take. Compromising in certain areas to ensure the task is complete, yet all parties walk away pleased with the outcome is a leadership skill for kids to master.

The process of compromise and negotiation teaches kids to stay focused on the bigger picture versus only their personal or singular outcome.

Planning/Strategic - Taking time for kids to plan a strategy is a great way to empower them and to build their self-esteem.

Given a large task, a child can easily become overwhelmed. However, by showing a child how to break down a task into smaller, bite-sized pieces will build their self-confidence and provide them with a clearer vision for success.

Vision - A child who can see their outcome clearly is more likely to achieve their vision. Kids can be taught how to better visualize through reading or listening to the tales of past achievers. Introduce your child to a world of successful people through books and movies that provide strong and memorable leadership lessons. Kids who are read to by their parents, and who are made to read from their early years, will greatly benefit in their adult years.

Reading. Kids who read yearn to learn. They will not only have a better appreciation and love for reading, they will also read faster while committing more information to memory and this promotes comprehension skills.

Persistence/Determination - Provide your child with a strong foundation of personal pride. Kids are too often coddled when they should instead be encouraged to pick themselves up and "shake it off". Vigorous physical exercises and games often help to foster competitive skills.

V. Applications Of ‘Child Leadership’ In School Curriculum: Frances A. Karnes and Suzanne M. Bean

People often say "Leaders are born, not made." However, if you look at some of the most successful leaders around like Bill Gates or Narayana Murthy, you will realize this is far from the truth. These global leaders didn't shine spectacularly in school. What both did however have in common was, surprisingly, that they were both children of school teachers - and, much more important, that they had a vision.

Infusing Leadership Concepts and Skills into the Curriculum

Major emphasis should be placed on leadership development in all academic areas, including the fine and performing arts. Thematic curriculum units and reading lists should include biographies and autobiographies of outstanding leaders. Students should be encouraged to analyze and

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evaluate the motivation, contributions, and influences of each leader and assess the leadership styles employed. Major events and family and other influences important in the life of each leader should be emphasized.

**Sciences.**

Physical and biological sciences, mathematics, and social sciences provide unique opportunities for projects in which initiating, planning, critical thinking, creative problem solving, and decision making can be developed. They are rich with opportunities to learn about leaders who have influenced such areas as government and politics, science and technology, humanities and the arts, business and industry, philosophy and religion, and health science and medicine. Students can learn how their interests, passions, and abilities can develop into careers. They can compare the contributions of others with their own value systems. For example, many leaders have been concerned about poverty and the human condition.

**Humanities.**

Language arts, speech, English, and other courses that emphasize oral and written communication provide opportunities for potential leaders to learn how to present ideas clearly and persuasively. Preparing and presenting speeches, listening to and critiquing presentations, writing news reports and editorials for school and other local publications, preparing for and engaging in debates, leading conference and discussion sessions, and participating in school and other election campaigns are only a few of the many options available. Group activities provide opportunities for young people to learn how to help others feel important and valued, accept their contributions, keep discussions relevant, and occasionally follow rather than lead.

**Arts.**

Students can learn leadership skills and gain inspiration from talented people of the past and present who have enriched all of us through their contributions in the fine and performing arts. Their creative works, the trends they initiated, and the enduring results of their efforts are worthy of study, as are their lives and the circumstances under which their work came to fruition.

**Other School Options for Leadership Development**

Several strategies strengthen and broaden educational experiences for gifted youth. Instructional units on leadership development should be provided at each grade level in a resource room or pullout administrative arrangement. Some secondary schools offer structured credit courses on leadership. Having students prepare and periodically update personal plans for leadership development, including provisions for obtaining the experiences set forth in their plans, is another promising activity. The value of this experience is enhanced when students share individual plans in group sessions, brief the group on their purpose, revise plans if the critique brings forth acceptable suggestions, report to peers on progress made after following the plans for a period of time, and evaluate the plans using self-designed criteria.

Mentorship’s and internship programs provide opportunities for youth to work with adult community leaders who are willing to help identify, develop, and nurture future leaders. Moreover, the only sure way to develop kids as leaders is to give them real leadership responsibilities.

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Leadership through Extracurricular Activities

Since leadership is learned over time through involvement with others, extracurricular activities provide fertile ground for nurturing future leaders. Group participation offers unique opportunities for young people to belong, support others, and learn a variety of leadership styles. Students learn how to encourage others, create group spirit, and resolve conflict. They begin to understand diverse attitudes, skills, and talents and how to interact effectively with a diversity of people while working toward a common goal.

Leadership in extracurricular activities has been found to be more highly correlated with adult leadership than with academic achievement. A 10-year study conducted with 515 high school student leaders revealed that almost two-thirds of them participated in out-of-school organizations and athletics and more than half participated in fine arts activities.

Although there are many organized extracurricular activities for youth, those who want to develop their leadership potential can do so through less formal methods. Individuals or groups can plan special projects or a leadership plan by setting goals, objectives, and timelines toward a mission of improving some area of the school or community. Skills such as seeking all available information, defining a group task, and devising a workable plan may be developed through any community project. No matter how small or large the goal, the process involved in devising and implementing the plan develops leadership potential.

Note: This Review Article on Child Leadership has been summarized, analyzed, segregated into pertinent subheadings and concept reviewed and compiled in a cogent perspective relevant for School Education. References were obtained from various web-based resources and the authors duly acknowledged.

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