

**ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND PROMOTING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN DANIEL 1:3-4,  
17-21**

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**ABSTRACT**

*From the beginning of time, leadership has been one of the most talked about and sought after feature in human civilization. A strong leader makes the difference between simple existence and excellence. Leaders inspire others, create vision among the followers, and communicate what they want to communicate, show openness, and listen to what their followers want to say. These people do not only create desired values in others, but also change the society positively and in a holistic way. Leadership is a concept that suggests direction, directorship, governorship, governance, administration, jurisdiction, captaincy, control, superintendence, ascendancy, rule, command, power, mastery, domination, dominion, premiership, and sovereignty. A leader is a person in authority that takes decision for an organization (Newman 2). It is also not news that many leaders have failed at one point or the other, while some others fail to create the expected impact. This paper looks into the place of academics in effective leadership by also looking into the studies which Daniel in Daniel chapter 2 passed through in order to become effective in office.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Leadership is a concept that suggests direction, directorship, governorship, governance, administration, jurisdiction, captaincy, control, superintendence, ascendancy, rule, command, power, mastery, domination, dominion, premiership, and sovereignty. A leader is a person in authority that takes decision for an organization (Newman 2). Now, it is becoming a passion to get an authentic, effective leader in higher educational sector, where students do not want to see their teacher as a teacher only rather they ask for something more. It is also not news that many leaders have failed at one point or the other, while some others fail to create impact.

According to Nze, the word “lead” comes from a common European root word meaning, “path road or the course of a ship at sea”. This presuppose that a leader is someone who knows where he/she is going and in doing so he/she chart a course for individual members of an organization to follow in order to achieve the set goals of that organization (2).

Such could also be applied to the leadership in the field of academics. Academic Leadership portrays a unique concept of higher education’s typical blend of tasks, goals, employees, governance structures, values, technologies and history (Altbach, Gumport and Johnstone 54). Particularly, the different approach of academic leadership exists due to different tactics which comprises of the educational mission, although a complex and vulnerable mixture of teaching, research, service and outreach. Therefore, strong leadership skills are needed for setting up the world-class university.

Additionally, the bold vision of the institution’s mission and goals, along with, a clearly articulated strategic plan is required to visualize the concrete plans and set goals. For Thelin, a huge capital is needed in educational institutions for teaching and research activities. In today's reality, academic leaders at all levels in government and private sector face challenge to grab talent, resources, investors, projects that earns good income, and tuition fees in an intensely competitive environment (34). They are pushed from different fronts to become more responsible, professional and market oriented in serving people, governments and industry. They have to tackle with intense changes in technology, major demographic and radical movements in student population, considerable new rivals and virtual universities (Bolman and Gallos 21).

Modern research concentrates on university leadership in the case of research focused universities, where the renowned varsities have pioneers who have great managerial abilities alongside a fruitful career as a

researcher (Goodall 2006). Additionally, a specific goal is set to create an agreeable vision for the fate of the varsity to actualize it in a powerful way, the university president, vice chancellor, or dean needs to completely comprehend the common goal of the institution and to have the ability to apply the vision with the essential operational abilities. Mostly academic leaders are gifted with the uncommon craft of Reframing – A conscious methodology of moving point of view to see the same circumstance in numerous ways and through distinctive lenses (Bolman and Gallos 23).

Education is essential for the future of society, and our role in this future is that of competent leaders of education (Dale, 2011). Now, it is becoming a passion to get an effective leader in education sector. And it is becoming more and more important in tertiary education where students do not want to see their teachers as a teacher only rather they ask for something more. When a student enter in higher education at the age of 18 s/he desire to have good person(s) besides them who will act not only as a teacher but also as a leader, as a mentor. Sometimes they will give feeling of their parents as some of them stay away from their parents.

Buchen argues that the only leadership that will make a difference is that of teachers. Today, an increasing number of colleges and universities worry about students' development of values and habits of mind (45). Whether designated leaders or not, they develop a sense of personal commitment, move beyond themselves to relationships with others in ways that galvanize their commitment to a common purpose (Larry and Jon 28). This article mainly tried to find out the most important qualities of a teacher by which s/he is consider as an excellent teacher as well as an effective, authentic leader to her/his followers, a group of students, who again become a leader in her or his own areas in future.

#### **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

Academic achievement was once thought to be the most important outcome of formal educational experiences and while there is little doubt as to the vital role such achievements play in student life and later (Kell, Lubinski, & Benbow, 53), researchers and policy makers are ever increasingly turning to social and emotional factors, as well as the relationships among them, as indicators of student well-being and psychological development (Chernyshenko, Kankaraš, & Drasgow, 78; Frydenberg, Martin, & Collie, 17; Moore, Mok, Chan, & Lai, 26). Indicative of this movement is the recent addition of social and emotional measures to established Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) measures (e.g. PISA, OECD, 29). These measures include, according to Chernyshenko et al. (218), emotional regulation (e.g. stress resistance, optimism), task performance (e.g. motivation, persistence, self-control) and compound skills (e.g. metacognition, self-efficacy). Consistent with this theme, you will find six quality empirical studies in this Issue that examine some of the complexities of such factors, some related to academic achievement, others not, having a legitimacy in their own right.

Academic achievement plays a role in the studies by Colmar, Liem, Connor, and Martin (93) and Martinez, Youssef-Morgan, Chambel, and Marques-Pinto (109). For Colmar et al. (39), the capacity of elementary school students to respond to academic setbacks, academic buoyancy, was not predictive of academic achievement. However, academic buoyancy effects were demonstrated for both reading and mathematics achievement in Australian students when mediated by self-concept. Psychological capital resources (e.g. efficacy, hope, optimism, resilience) are foregrounded in Martinez et al.'s (201) examination of Spanish/Portugese university students' engagement and achievement. Their findings showed that students who report being engaged in learning are more likely to be users of psychological capital who in turn are more likely to achieve higher academically.

Achievement goals (Elliot, 25) underpin the studies by Cho and Kim (19) and Chen, Elliot, and Sheldon (203). The former examined longitudinally South Korean secondary students and also investigated self-determined motivation (Ryan & Deci, 20). Among some complex findings, Cho and Kim (22) showed that early autonomous motives were related positively to mastery-oriented goals in the following year, which in turn were related to increased autonomous motives in the next year. The latter study explored psychological need support (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) in concert with achievement goals in their Chinese

university sample showing, among other results, the importance of mastery-approach goals as mediators in linking autonomy support and self-determined motivation.

Procrastination, academic engagement and the use of multiple social network sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) are the core elements of Closson and Bond's (29) study with Canadian university students. In a very timely investigation, they reported that the use of certain social network sites contributed to procrastination and mal-adaptation to university life while other sites, the less complex ones, had less negative outcomes.

Each of the above studies adds significantly to our current understandings of the complexities of learning. The inclusion of longitudinal work in this Issue is pleasing as is the focus on social media influences. Greater attention could be paid to more qualitative data-gathering to support the strong quantitative data demonstrated here. While much has been done in examining the effects of enhancing students' social and emotional learning (e.g. Durlak, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Gullotta, 215), greater integration of these strategies into teaching and learning needs to be undertaken, and researched, at all levels of education.

### **PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP**

Leadership in the other hand is a process to develop one as a leader. This is happen by personal development which discovers who we are, as well as what skills we possess (Bennis 19). Not all leadership roles are fixed. Someone might act as a mentor one week and then assume the role of innovator with a unique proposal the following week (Gabriel 45). Authentic leaders are more agile in their behavior, more effective in decision making, clearer about motivations and expectations of others, and more flexible in adjusting to new situations (Lee and King, 21).

Again, authentic leaders see themselves as stewards of the assets they inherit and servants of all their stakeholders (George, 23). Certain skills are necessary in order to remain authentic as a leader which makes them more flexible and confident in their approaches to goal achievement (Lee and King 21). Like skills traits are also important for leadership. According to Davis and Newstrom, some common leadership traits are: visionary, experts and knowledgeable, mentors, patient, organizer, charisma, thinkers, listeners, sensors, good communicator, and self-confidence (76). Kouzes and Posner developed a survey name 'The leadership practices inventory' that asked people which, of a list are common characteristics of leaders. The results showed that people preferred characteristics, such as honest, forward-looking, competent, inspiring, intelligent, fair-minded, broad-minded, supportive, straightforward, dependable, cooperative, determined, imaginative, ambitious, courageous, caring, mature, loyal, self-controlled, and independent (55).

In recent years the new competencies of leadership such as sense making, ability to deliver, inter organizational representation, has been known as one of the effective leadership qualities. It is composed of four dimensions: ideal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Storey 34). Now, a good number of educational institutes giving increasing importance on leadership learning. Howe and Freeman shows that an increasing number of institutions of higher learning are now offering programs that prepare students for leadership (n.pg).

### **EXEGETICAL STUDY OF THE TEXT**

#### **Background**

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the whole book. It relates early events in the lives of Daniel and his three Hebrew contemporaries, but the emphasis is on Daniel's decisions. These choices formed the basis for his character, and his character and abilities accounted for the unusually long and successful career that he enjoyed in the service of several monarchs (Montgomery 113). His godly character also provides a key concerning God's choice of him to receive and transmit the remarkable revelations of the future that this book contains. God's choice of Daniel was sovereign, but Daniel's choices qualified him to serve as God intended. The first chapter is introductory. It sets forth the moral condition suited to enlightenment in the ways and counsels of God (Ironside 10-11). Structurally, the chapter is a chiasm with the first 14 verses

presenting a tension and the last 7 providing the resolution (Goldingay 12). The book opens with a synopsis of the first Jewish deportation in 605 B.C. (2 Kings 24:1-2; 2 Chronicles 36:6. Daniel and his three friends were part of the nobles and royal families taken from Jerusalem as captives then (Wiseman 46-47).

### Exegesis

- **Verse 2**

Daniel wrote that the Lord was responsible for Nebuchadnezzar's success in defeating Jehoiakim. He viewed God as sovereignly controlling the past affairs of His chosen people (Ephesians 1:4). As the book unfolds, this appreciation for God's sovereignty continues as Daniel described God's future dealings with the Jews and the Gentiles.

Daniel used the name "Shinar" to describe Babylon (Daniel 1:2). Shinar is a biblical name for Babylon that often connotes a place hostile to God and faith in God (cf. Genesis 10:10; Genesis 11:2; Genesis 14:1; Isaiah 11:11 [NIV margin]; Zechariah 5:11 [NIV margin]). Carrying off the vessels from a conquered people's temple was a way that ancient Near Eastern kings expressed their victorious sovereignty over that nation, particularly its gods (cf. Daniel 5:3-4). Therefore Daniel began this book by reminding his readers that it was not only Israel's king who suffered defeat at Nebuchadnezzar's hands, but also Yahweh had experienced humiliation. He then proceeded to vindicate Yahweh with all that follows.

- **Verses 3-5**

Nebuchadnezzar's enlightened policy was to employ the best minds in his kingdom in government service, regardless of their national or ethnic origin. We do not know how many other Jews and Gentiles were the classmates of Daniel and his three friends. However, they were evidently the only ones who expressed a desire to observe the Jewish dietary laws (Exodus 34:15; Proverbs 20:1).

"In selecting these youths for education in the king's court in Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar was accomplishing several objectives. Those carried away captive could well serve as hostages to help keep the royal family of the kingdom of Judah in line. Their presence in the king's court also would be a pleasant reminder to the Babylonian king of his conquest and success in battle. Further, their careful training and preparation to be his servants might serve Nebuchadnezzar well in later administration of Jewish affairs" (Walvoord 34).

There has been some question whether Daniel and his three friends were castrated and made eunuchs. This possibility seems unlikely since there is no direct evidence of this in the text. Josephus implied that they may have become eunuchs. "He (Nebuchadnezzar) also made some of them [the most noble of the Jewish children] to be eunuchs; which course he took also with those of other nations whom he had taken in the flower of their age, and afforded them their diet from his own table, and had them instructed in the institutes of the country, and taught the learning of the Chaldeans . . ." (Josephus 773). The Hebrew word *saris* ("official," Daniel 1:3) can mean both "court official" and "eunuch." These youths were without defects (Daniel 1:4). If Nebuchadnezzar wanted youths without defects, it seems unreasonable that he would then turn around and give them a major defect (*The New Bible Dictionary* "Eunuch," Sheriffs 232).

Josephus also wrote that Daniel and his three peers "were four of the family of Zedekiah." (Josephus 10:10:1). This may be accurate or only Jewish tradition, but clearly they were either members of the royal family or children of Judean nobles (Daniel 1:3; Isaiah 39:6-7). The three-year program of study that Daniel and his three companions underwent involved study of the literature and language of the Chaldeans (Daniel 1:4). The term "Chaldean" has a double meaning in the Book of Daniel. In some places, including here, it refers to ethnic southern Babylonians (Daniel 3:8; Daniel 5:30; Daniel 9:1). In others, it describes a class of astrologers and priests that emerged from the ethnic Chaldeans (Daniel 2:2; Daniel 2:4-5; Daniel 2:10; Daniel 4:7; Daniel 5:7; Daniel 5:11).

"The Babylonian sages combined many of the functions fulfilled by wise men, prophets, and priests in Israel, though they are to be distinguished from those cultic functionaries who were more especially concerned with the temple and its ritual. They were the guardians of the sacred traditional lore developed and preserved in Mesopotamia over centuries, covering natural history, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, myth, and chronicle. Much of this learning had a practical purpose, being designed to be applied to life by means of

astrology, oneirology, hepatoscopy and the study of other organs, rites of purification, sacrifice, incantation, exorcism and other forms of divination and magic" (Goldingay 16).

Evidently what these young men studied was the history and literature of this ancient part of the world. This included the old Akkadian and the ancient Sumerian cultures from which the Babylonian had developed. Learning the language of a people is one of the best ways to absorb the worldview of its people. Thus Nebuchadnezzar was seeking to acculturate these youths and make them thoroughly Babylonian. "In order to witness to their God in the Babylonian court they had to understand the cultural presuppositions of those around them, just as the Christian today must work hard at the religions and cultures amongst which he lives, if different thought-worlds are ever to meet" (Baldwin 80-81). This is a dangerous task, however (Whitcomb 32).

". . . Daniel had no physical blemish and was pleasing in appearance. Mentally, he was intelligent, knowledgeable, and quick to learn. Socially, he was poised and able to live in the king's court without creating embarrassment for himself or others" (Campbell 9).

- **Verses 14-16**

God gave the young men better (fatter, i.e., healthier) appearances by natural or by supernatural means. The result of the test encouraged their supervisor to continue feeding them a diet of things grown in the ground. This is the meaning of the rare Hebrew word translated "vegetables" or "pulse" (Young 46; Montgomery 132). God blessed these three young men because they followed His will, not because they ate vegetables instead of meat. We should not use this passage to argue for the intrinsic superiority of vegetarian diets (cf. Genesis 9:3). "Even a small act of self-discipline, taken out of loyalty to principle, sets God's servants in the line of His approval and blessing. In this way actions attest faith, and character is strengthened to face more difficult situations in the future" (Baldwin 84)

- **Verse 17**

In addition to favor with their overseers, God gave Daniel and his three friends the ability to master the subjects they studied and wisdom in these matters (James 1:5). They may have thought that Nebuchadnezzar had designed their curriculum, but really God had. Like Moses and Paul, Daniel had an excellent educational background and an unusually brilliant mind. God also gave Daniel the supernatural ability to understand visions and dreams (Daniel 1:17). Visions and dreams were the primary means God used to communicate His revelations to prophets in the Old Testament (Numbers 12:6). From the writer's perspective, Daniel qualified for the blessing of receiving this special gift by choosing to remain loyal to God's will. Daniel's similarity to Joseph is again obvious. "In Hebrew usage the wisdom terms of this verse (Daniel 1:4) had ethical religious overtones, for without wholehearted commitment to the Lord and obedience to His will there could be no wisdom (Job 28:28)" (Montgomery 133).

- **Verses 18-20**

At the end of their three-year curriculum, the four faithful friends received a final examination that included an oral testing by the king himself (Proverbs 22:29). They passed at the head of their class (1 Samuel 2:30). They were probably close to 20 years old at this time (Walvoord 41). Nebuchadnezzar proceeded to give them positions of significant government responsibility, which their education had equipped them for. In these positions they proved far superior to any of the other officials. "Ten times better" (Daniel 1:20) seems to be a hyperbolic idiom meaning many times better (Genesis 31:7; Genesis 31:41; Numbers 14:22; Nehemiah 4:12; Job 19:3).

The fact that Daniel called these other officials magicians (Heb. *hartummim*, astrological diviners) and conjurers (Heb. *assapim*, enchaners, NIV) has raised questions about whether the four Hebrew youths practiced occult arts. If they refused to eat non-kosher food because of religious conviction, they presumably would not have participated in divination and magic, which the Mosaic Law also expressly forbade (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). Probably we should understand that they excelled in the matter of offering wise advice to their king. Daniel also received insight into the future from the Lord (Daniel 1:17), so he would have had better knowledge of the future than the Chaldean astrologers. Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 7-12 validate this claim. There we read of no pagan divining but straightforward prophetic revelation, some in direct

answer to prayer. Daniel could write this of himself without boasting, because he credited God with giving him his abilities.

- **Verse 21**

Daniel excelled quantitatively as well as qualitatively. The kings under which he served recognized and continued to employ his divinely bestowed talents for many years. Cyrus' first year as king of Babylon was 538 B.C. This was the year in which Cyrus issued his decree permitting the Jews to return to their land. The first return took place the next year, in 537 B.C. Thus Daniel's ministry as a government official spanned approximately 65 years. Daniel 10:1 clarifies that Daniel continued to receive revelations from the Lord even after his career as a government official ended (Dyer 702).

Two dates bracket this first chapter, the year that Daniel went to Babylon as a captive (605 B.C.) and the year that his government career ended (538 B.C.). The content of this chapter focuses on the key to Daniel's remarkable career. He purposed to remain faithful to God's will even in a relatively minor matter. God blessed that commitment and gave this already gifted and diligent young man additional talents and opportunities with which to serve Him. The chapter introduces the rest of the book, which contains such amazing revelations that the reader might question their validity, without this introduction to the prophet himself. "Daniel and his three friends became models of how Jews were to remain faithful to God while under gentile dominion" (Dyer 702).

### **Theological Conclusion**

As pointed from the exegesis above, Daniel and his three Hebrew brothers were trained successfully because they received insight from the Lord, not just for the present but into the future. So Daniel by this would have had better knowledge of the future than the Chaldean astrologers; chapters 2, 4, 5, and 7-12 validate this claim. There we read of no pagan divining but straightforward prophetic revelation, some in direct answer to prayer. Daniel could write this of himself without boasting, because he credited God with giving him his abilities. Hence, the academic training Daniel received which lasted for three years curriculum helped Daniel to do efficiently and effectively in his office in Babylon.

### **THE PLACE OF ACADEMICS IN LEADERSHIP**

Historically, leadership is as old as that of creation. Reason to this is because it occupies a very unique position in every society, organization or community. Generally, leadership is a key in determining organizational growth and success. Whether in the religious organizations, or the wider social settings, the approach any leadership employs in managing the affairs of the group(s) of people impacts on the direction the organization takes. The effectiveness of any organization is determined on the leadership approach and process of elected members.

With the knowledge that leadership is an important dimension of management whose presence and existence depends on several skills of a group of people, the lives of those in it must be fully baked to suit the responsibilities. Leadership excellence requires being in touch with one's mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects including one's values, talents, personality, and self-image, passions, intellect, competencies, personal aspirations, and family and community life. Effective leaders understand themselves, learn to set personal goals, and work to achieve those goals through their self-selected plans and abilities and the place of education cannot be neglected in order to achieve the above perceived qualities.

Leadership is ideal in the tenets of every existing society or organization, so is learning as well which comes through education. This is because it is important to human society. A society or an organization without leadership and education joined together is like sheep without a shepherd and there is bound to be confusion, disorderliness, lawlessness and unproductivity. In a society or organization where there is poor leadership and absence of education, there is bound to be confusion, disorderliness and lawlessness (Tamunomiebi cited Danbaba 48).

Leadership which is the ability to lead others by influence holds true as a principle. Hence, we shall all exercise some degree of leadership in our lives but it may not be effective and efficient when education is missing. Maybe the experience was not running a company or governing state, but it is the influence of one friend on another, or as a parent to a child, a spouse on a family, a teacher on a student, a pastor on a congregation, a manager on a subordinate, or a politician on his/her constituents. Leadership can also be seen simply as a responding responsibility. True leaders have no interest in themselves or position, the leader within you comes alive when you discover the interest in themselves or position, the leader within you comes alive when you discover the purpose and vision for your life, and set out to fulfill it without compromise (Myles 19).

Leadership in faith-based organizations may seem to be vague, when viewed from the entire perspectives of the field of leadership because some feel that academics is required. This is more so as it has to do with divine concepts, things that are spiritual, and as it has been classified, that the faith-based organizations are non-profit organizations. The world system of leadership is characterized by tussles, scheming and counter scheming. That is why day after day, the world is perceived to be in a state of chaos. Thus, the faith-based organization which is expected to proffer solution to the problems of the world (especially in the area of leadership) is now part and parcel of the problem. Tamunomiebi cited Danbaba said that the secular way of political campaign which is not devoid of lobbying, bribery, nepotism, ethnicity and other forms of menace has become the order of the day in some faith-based organization today, thereby giving room to the fact that there is no difference between the secular politics/leadership and the church politics/leadership. Politics has eventually found its route in the church due to the quest for materialism, power and popularity (48).

Leaders around the world are finding out that globalization has complicated their lives but the help of studies and critical evaluations can help solve this problem, yet it is not that possible without involving academics. The rules found in old administrative manuals no longer work smoothly in a world of cultural diversity. What used to be “straight-forward” is now more difficult because workers in the multicultural team bring their own perceptions and expectations to the table. Things that could be easily fixed “with a little good will” or “behind closed doors” have now become complex, culture-charged, and counter-intuitive (Baumgartner, n.pg) and this paper attributes it to absence of the value of education/academics in the field of leadership. The complications of globalization have traceable features in faith-based organizations. Some of these features is the recognition of ethnic divides in leadership processes. In a natural phenomenon in every society, there are misapplications in the leadership processes and that has not produced or contributed to successful leadership. Hence, academics is needed to readdress this misapplications in the area of leadership in the society today.

## **CONCLUSION**

Excellence in leadership is expected by everyone. However, leading in leadership is not just good technique without its effectiveness which this paper proposes to come from education. People give importance on different attributes/qualities of a leader to be excellent depending on their own judgment. This judgment varies from person to person, country to countries. It depends on persons own values, norms, customs, ethics, culture, etc. These attributes are sometimes same regardless of countries boundary. These attributes/qualities make a leader a figure for the society but many among them leave out the place of education/academics.

While Bennis contends that “leadership is not a science. It’s not a recipe. It’s not the five rules about this or the six effective habits of that. It is an art” (33). It is mainly part of social science. It is important for a leader to act as a facilitator, as a mentor and in doing so the required qualities do not need to be of magnificence or not about doing something out of world. It should be noted that leaders are actually of the led, by the led and for the led. The degree of importance of qualities sometimes varies depending on the discipline (science, arts, and business). At the same time, there are many external factors which influence the leaders and create discrepancy between the leaders desired/ expected behavior and overt behavior. In considering the place of academics in leadership, we are not to forget that situational factors also play an important role in the

leadership process. As a leader it is of utmost importance that one tunes her/his leadership skills and find the best style of leadership for the people they are leading as they strive to achieve academic excellence like Daniel in order to be more effective in office.

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