

## Leadership style of supervisors involved in ODL System

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### ABSTRACT

*The Directorate of Distance Education, University of Kashmir offers, one year Diploma in pre-primary teacher training programme. One of the components of the programme is practice of teaching which is conducted in identified schools. The headmasters working in these schools perform the duty of supervisor for DPPTT students and thereby become the part of ODL system. After making review of related literature a research gap was identified, " Leadership style of supervisors involved in ODL System". Fifty headmasters (supervisors) working in practice of teaching schools were taken as a sample. The tools used was Shalini Bhogle, Leadership Style Questionnaire. In this questionnaire there are 13 different situations posed to the head, in the form of an event. The headmaster chooses one. Each denotes a fixed style of Leadership, Autocratic, democratic and laissez faire. The study has revealed that most of the headmasters exhibit laissez faire type of leadership which has negative impact on supervision part of our students. This issue merits attention. The need of the hour is to conduct, orientation programme for the capacity building of faculty involved in ODL system.*

**Key words:** Distance Education, Open Learning, Leadership and Administration

### Introduction

Leadership has been described as "a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task",<sup>[1]</sup> although there are alternative definitions of leadership. For example, some understand a leader simply as somebody whom people follow, or as somebody who guides or directs others, while others define leadership as "organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal Studies of leadership have produced theories involving traits,<sup>[2]</sup> situational interaction, function, behavior, power, vision and values,<sup>[3]</sup> charisma, and intelligence, among others.

### Leadership styles

A leadership style is a leader's style of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. It is the result of the philosophy, personality, and experience of the leader. Rhetoric specialists have also developed models for understanding leadership (Robert Hariman, Political Style,<sup>[4]</sup> Philippe-Joseph Salazar, L'Hyperpolitique. Technologies politiques De La Domination<sup>[5]</sup>).

Different situations call for different leadership styles. In an emergency when there is little time to converge on an agreement and where a designated authority has significantly more experience or expertise than the rest of the team, an autocratic leadership style may be most effective; however, in a highly motivated and aligned team with a homogeneous level of expertise, a more democratic or laissez-faire style may be more effective. The style adopted should be the one that most effectively achieves the objectives of the group while balancing the interests of its individual members.<sup>[6]</sup>

### Engaging style

Engaging as part of leadership style has been mentioned in various literature earlier. Dr. Stephen L. Cohen, the Senior Vice President for Right Management's Leadership Development Center of Excellence, has in his article Four Key Leadership Practices for Leading in Tough Times has mentioned

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Engagement as the fourth Key practice. He writes, "These initiatives do for the organization is engage both leaders and employees in understanding the existing conditions and how they can collectively assist in addressing them. Reaching out to employees during difficult times to better understand their concerns and interests by openly and honestly conveying the impact of the downturn on them and their organizations can provide a solid foundation for not only engaging them but retaining them when things do turn around."<sup>[7]</sup>

Engagement as the key to Collaborative Leadership is also emphasized in several original research papers and programs.<sup>[8]</sup> Becoming an agile has long been associated with Engaging leaders - rather than leadership with a hands-off approach.<sup>[9]</sup>

#### **Autocratic or authoritarian style**

Under the autocratic leadership style, all decision-making powers are centralized in the leader, as with dictators. Leaders do not entertain any suggestions or initiatives from subordinates. The autocratic management has been successful as it provides strong motivation to the manager. It permits quick decision-making, as only one person decides for the whole group and keeps each decision to him/herself until he/she feels it needs to be shared with the rest of the group.<sup>[6]</sup>

#### **Participative or democratic style**

The democratic leadership style consists of the leader sharing the decision-making abilities with group members by promoting the interests of the group members and by practicing social equality. This has also been called shared leadership.

#### **Laissez-faire or free-rein style**

A person may be in a leadership position without providing leadership, leaving the group to fend for itself. Subordinates are given a free hand in deciding their own policies and methods. The subordinates are motivated to be creative and innovative.

#### **Narcissistic leadership**

Narcissistic leadership is a leadership style in which the leader is only interested in him/herself. Their priority is themselves - at the expense of their people/group members. This leader exhibits the characteristics of a narcissist: arrogance, dominance and hostility. It is a common leadership style. The narcissism may range from anywhere between healthy and destructive. To critics, "narcissistic leadership (preferably destructive) is driven by unyielding arrogance, self-absorption, and a personal egotistic need for power and admiration."<sup>[10]</sup>

#### **Toxic leader**

A toxic leader is someone who has responsibility over a group of people or an organization, and who abuses the leader-follower relationship by leaving the group or organization in a worse-off condition than when he/she joined it.

#### **Task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership**

Task-oriented leadership is a style in which the leader is focused on the tasks that need to be performed in order to meet a certain production goal. Task-oriented leaders are generally more concerned with producing a step-by-step solution for given problem or goal, strictly making sure these deadlines are met, results and reaching target outcomes.<sup>[11]</sup> Relationship-oriented leadership is a contrasting style in which the leader is more focused on the relationships amongst the group and is generally more concerned with the overall well-being and satisfaction of group members.<sup>[12]</sup> Relationship-oriented leaders emphasize communication within the group, show trust and confidence in group members, and shows appreciation for work done. Task-oriented leaders are typically less concerned with the idea of catering to group members,

and more concerned with acquiring a certain solution to meet a production goal. For this reason, they typically are able to make sure that deadlines are met, yet their group members' well-being may suffer.<sup>[11]</sup> Relationship-oriented leaders are focused on developing the team and the relationships in it. The positives to having this kind of environment are that team members are more motivated and have support; however, the emphasis on relations as opposed to getting a job done might make productivity suffer.<sup>[11]</sup> This paper studies the leadership style of supervisors involved in ODL System.

#### **Analysis & Interpretation of Results (Item-wise)**

##### **Item 1.**

In order to attend a workshop meant for headmasters, you are to be away from the school for four months. The annual examination of the school and new admissions would be conducted during this period. It is not compulsory for you to attend the workshop.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Type of Leadership</b>	<b>%age of agreement</b>
A. I shall ask the school management to make suitable arrangements in my absence and attend the workshop.	Laissez-faire	80%
B. I shall attend the workshop. Our teachers are well experienced. They can run the school quite efficiently even in my absence. I shall distribute the charges amongst the teachers and the assistant headmaster will be in over all charge.	Democratic	10%
C. An headmaster worth his salt cannot be away from the school for a long period of four months especially at the time of examination and admissions. If it were shorter period, the assistant headmaster would have managed it. In this case I will not attend it.	Autocratic	10%

##### **Item 2.**

The Director of Public Instruction has written to you, to undertake the responsibility of housing and organising a camp with participants from 10 school, during the December vacation. Your teachers are very reluctant to have it in your school. You are expected to reply to D.P.I.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Type of Leadership</b>	<b>%age of agreement</b>
A. I shall write to the D.P.I that the School will undertake the responsibility, and shall tell the teachers that they have to organise the camp whether they like it or not.	Autocratic	20%
B. If the teachers are not willing then headmaster cannot do anything. I shall have to write to the D.P.I that the school cannot organise the camp because the teachers are not wanting it.	Laissez-faire	70%
C. The organisation of a camp is a creative activity. The school and the staff are likely to get some opportunity to learn how to organise a camp. So, I shall discuss with the teachers to make it possible as good as they can.	Democratic	10%

**Item 3.**

One of the assistant teachers has suggested a new way of scheduling the work-load of teachers through a committee of teachers.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Type of Leadership</b>	<b>%age of agreement</b>
A. If the teachers come forward to manage their own work through a joint co-operative system, I shall join them in the enterprise and shall welcome such an initiative as it provides sharing of experience and ideas.	Democratic	10%
B. I consider, it will make things difficult for me to maintain discipline amongst the teachers. After all scheduling the work-load is headmaster's duty and, I do not want others to do it for me. I cannot accept such a proposal.	Autocratic	05%
C. Scheduling is not so important as to require my attention. If the teachers want to decide what should be done let them decide. I shall approve the plan.	Laissez-faire	85%

**Item 4.**

The governing body of the school is of the opinion that you as a headmaster did not use sufficient tact in handling students strike, and consequently the school was put to considerable loss and damage. They have asked you to send your explanation if any.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Type of Leadership</b>	<b>%age of agreement</b>
A. I will explain that in meeting the situation I have been continuously in touch with my colleagues for adopting a suitable course of action. And I think it was the best under the circumstances of which I assume the full responsibility.	Democratic	05%
B. I considered it was futile to meet the agitated students, they were in a violent mood. Nothing better was possible in the situation.	Laissez-faire	80%
C. With all the power that I have as a headmaster, I tried to suppress the students, but apparently the students were out of control. Of course I feel that deterrent punishment should have been given.	Autocratic	15%

**Item 5.**

You receive a request from some brilliant students of the final year class that they want some extra coaching for the coming Public Examination in order to secure higher ranks.

Component	Type of Leadership	%age of agreement
A. It is difficult to arrange such classes, as I cannot impose additional burden on the teachers under the existing rules. So let the students make their own arrangements.	Laissez-faire	75%
B. I shall encourage the students for this initiative, but tell them I like to discuss the matter with the other teachers and possibly the teachers committee may find a way out.	Democratic	15%
C. Since, rank holders are a matter of prestige to the school I shall send a circular to the teachers assigning some of them for the extra coaching class.	Autocratic	10%

**Item 6.**

A lady teacher had a delivery early in the summer vacation. She has applied for maternity leave from the date of re-opening of the school after the summer vacation. The rule governing the maternity leave is rather vague, (as to when this period of two months should commence) and much depends on your discretion.

Component	Type of Leadership	%age of agreement
A. The teacher has had enough rest when she needed it, and she should join the school on completion of two months from the date of delivery.	Autocratic	20%
B. I have to find out from her how many days of leave she thinks she would need, after the reopening, and if it is reasonable shall help her to have it.	Democratic	10%
C. I do not think I have much to do in this case. I shall simply recommend the application for two months of maternity leave.	Laissez-faire	70%

**Item 7.**

A very influential member of the school management asks you to admit his below normal child in your school. His admission is to affect the discipline of the class and so the class teacher has advised you against this admission. You know the admission would help the school in getting more grants.

Component	Type of Leadership	%age of agreement
A. I think it would be in the interest of the school to admit the child, one dull child in the class will not affect the class materially. But the grants will surely be helpful for the school and could even be used to improve many such children.	Autocratic	20%
B. I shall circulate the letter among other teachers for their opinion and shall ask the assistant headmaster to decide in the matter.	Laissez-faire	70%
C. I shall ask a competent teacher to study the child carefully. On the merit of report the class teacher and I shall jointly take the decision, if the child should be admitted or not.	Democratic	10%

**Item 8.**

You get a letter from a parent that his son was beaten up by bigger and stronger classmate for refusing to do the home work for him. On inquiries you find that the complaint was valid.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Type of Leadership</b>	<b>%age of agreement</b>
A. Quarrels among the students are numerous and so often that a single headmaster of such a big institution cannot afford to waste time in investigating them. However, I shall try to speak to the miscreant and inform the father accordingly.	Laissez-faire	75%
B. I shall meet out severe punishment to the bigger boy and warn him that in case he misbehaves again, he would be rusticated.	Autocratic	10%
C. I shall discuss the incident with the class as a whole and also discuss with the teacher for finding ways such that the two boys are able to do their home work themselves.	Democratic	15%

**Item 9.**

You receive an application from your assistant teacher requesting you to relieve him of his job as he has secured a better one elsewhere. You did not know that the teacher had applied elsewhere. Rules require, that application for any job should be sent through you. If the teacher is relieved now, teaching would greatly suffer.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Type of Leadership</b>	<b>%age of agreement</b>
A. I shall call for the explanation of the teacher and tell him that he cannot be relieved, as he did not apply through proper channel. I do not want the school work to suffer and shall warn him, that in future applications should be sent through the headmaster.	Autocratic	20%
B. The teacher is to be relieved as it is a better job. I cannot ask him to continue when he is not willing. I shall explore what alternative arrangements could be made to relieve him.	Democratic	10%
C. The teacher should see the Secretary of the Managing committee and get his clearance. Personally I do not have any objection, after all, no one is indispensable.	Laissez-faire	70%

**Item 10.**

You have received a note from the Students Union of your School (obviously under outside inspiration) that they would go on strike if the evaluation of the examination papers is not made more leniently.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Type of Leadership</b>	<b>%age of agreement</b>
A. I shall sit with the students to discuss with them about the suitable action regarding evaluation. To me strike is not the problem, problem is their dissatisfaction about evaluation.	Democratic	15%
B. I shall inform the Students Union that if they went on strike or cause any disturbance severe disciplinary action will be taken against them.	Autocratic	10%
C. I shall send the note to the governing body of the school and the Parent Teacher Association as, I consider the decision of what is to be done in such situation is upto them.	Laissez-faire	75%

**Item 11.**

The governing body of the school considers that some weak students need extra coaching in some subjects beyond the school hours and you should make arrangements for it. You apprehend some resistance to this idea from some teachers.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Type of Leadership</b>	<b>%age of agreement</b>
A. I shall also share the extra work with my teachers, shall find out if they can volunteer to do the work by rotation. I shall also try to impress them that, the teachers credit lies in pulling a backward student up and here is an opportunity for them.	Democratic	15%
B. Teachers are full time employees of the school and it is a part of their duty to teach the subject well, it affects the school performance. They should attend to these backward children.	Autocratic	15%
C. Shall forward the letter to the assistant headmaster to make suitable arrangements for these children. If there is something that I can do, I shall do so.	Laissez-faire	70%

**Item 12.**

You heard a rumour that a certain teacher is very communal in his approach towards pupils. On preliminary inquiries, you understand that although there is exaggeration yet there was some truth in it. You also discover that communal tendencies were present in some other teachers also.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Type of Leadership</b>	<b>%age of agreement</b>
A. I think , as a free citizen every person has his own ways of thinking and I cannot go on correcting individual opinions or modes of thinking.	Laissez-faire	80%
B. I shall convene a meeting of the teachers to discuss about communalism. Shall firmly point out that communalism is not conductive in a school situation. It is an unhealthy feature.	Democratic	10%
C. I shall call each of the teachers and tell him that there is absolutely no place for communal feeling in my school. If I find anybody communal I can become ruthless to outcast such a person.	Autocratic	10%

**Item 13.**

The assistant headmaster of the school who happens to be your colleague and friend over a long period of time suggests you in writing that the school teachers and students would show remarkable progress in their achievements if you reduce your check on them.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Type of Leadership</b>	<b>%age of agreement</b>
A. I can never trust my assistants and students. The assistant headmaster is too good to be a leader. I think he does not know that school would be a big mess if I do not check constantly.	Autocratic	20%
B. As a headmaster as I think I was expected to take rounds. I used to go round but if that is a problem I may stop going around.	Laissez-faire	70%
C. I have always been thinking for the progress of my school. I think I should try out this suggestion for a fortnight to see the results. If there is a worthwhile progress I shall willingly follow this suggestion.	Democratic	10%

**Findings:**

The table reflected above is self-explanatory. It has been observed that most of the headmasters working in Govt. Schools exhibit laissez-faire style of leadership. They are in the chair without providing effective leadership, leaving the group to fend for itself. It is sort of escapism on the part of headmasters. Sub-ordinates are given a free hand in deciding their own policies and methods. Such headmasters lack decision making. They are more interested in routine work and pass the responsibility on others shoulders. This “no concern attitude” on the part of headmasters has a negative impact on school administration and supervision. There is no accountability and answerability. Everyone comes and leaves the school at his own sweet will. This “no concern attitude” on the part of headmasters has resulted in increasing dropout rate, low academic results in board examinations and serious wastage of resources and public money.

**Concluding Remarks**

The Directorate of Distance Education, University of Kashmir offers, one year Diploma in pre-primary teacher training programme. One of the components of the programme is practice of teaching which is conducted in identified schools. The headmasters working in these schools perform the duty of supervisor for DPPTT students and thereby become the part of ODL system. After making review of related literature a research gap was identified, “Leadership style of supervisors involved in ODL System”. Fifty headmasters (supervisors) working in practice of teaching schools were taken as a sample. The tool used was Shalini Bhogle, Leadership Style Questionnaire. In this questionnaire there are 13 different situations posed to the head, in the form of an event. The headmaster chooses one. Each denotes a fixed style of Leadership, Autocratic, democratic and laissez faire. The study has revealed that most of the headmasters exhibit laissez faire type of leadership which has negative impact on supervision part of our students. This issue merits attention. For sample basis I shall read here two items from the study. One of the assistant teachers has suggested a new way of scheduling the work-load of teachers through a committee of teachers. 80% of the headmasters responded to this item that scheduling is not so important so as to require



their attention. If the teachers want to decide what should be done let them decide. They shall approve the plan. 10% of the headmasters responded that if the teachers come forward to manage their own work through a joint cooperative system, they shall join them in enterprise and shall welcome such an initiative as it provides sharing of experience and ideas. 10 % of the respondents agreed that they consider that new ways of scheduling the work load of teachers will make things difficult for them. They said that scheduling the work load is headmasters duty and were not ready to listen to juniors, so out rightly rejected the proposal. It has been observed that most of the headmasters working in Govt. Schools exhibit laissez-faire style of leadership. They are in the chair without providing effective leadership, leaving the group to fend for itself. It is sort of escapism on the part of headmasters. Sub-ordinates are given a free hand in deciding their own policies and methods. Such headmasters lack decision making. They are more interested in routine work and pass the responsibility on others shoulders. This “no concern attitude” on the part of headmasters has a negative impact on school administration and supervision. There is no accountability and answerability. Everyone comes and leaves the school at his own sweet will. This “no concern attitude” on the part of headmasters has resulted in increasing dropout rate, low academic results in board examinations and serious wastage of resources and public money.

#### End Note

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