

School Leadership: Qualitative Mapping of Fiedler Model

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Abstract

With the growing demands of technological revolution and increasing demands of leadership, schools have become the hubs of knowledge, reaction and dissemination. The higher education scenario is dependent on school education thus the academic environment of school will create lifelong impact on learner's mind. Previous researches suggest leadership approach creates an impact on school environment and learning of students. There are many suggestive approaches for leadership but Fiedler model of leadership is significant which creates an impact on school environment and provides amicable surrounding for school staff. The present study found most of the principals of schools are person oriented.

Keywords: Fiedler Model, School Leadership, School Environment

Conceptual Framework

The assessment of the leadership potential is done on the basis of his or her preference as to whether he or she is task oriented or relationship oriented. The task oriented leaders perform better at the extremes, either at the favourable end when the task is structured, the position power is good and there is better relationship with the team members, and on the other end when all these factors are not favouring and leader finds himself or herself at the unfavourable end. But the relationship oriented leader performs better at the moderate position and not when the conditions are extremes. The leaders can adjust these environment variables to suit their needs.

Situational Approach or Contingency Approach

The trait approach of leadership has paved way for many other approaches. The situational approach emerged which depends mainly on situational factors like the task to be completed or the leader, follower Fred Fiedler's theory of leadership talks about the situational approach in 1950's and 60's. In his opinion the individual traits of a leader are constant and can't be altered. The situations, a leader faces, vary. The leader has to adapt as per the demands of the situation. He says that leaders may be either task oriented or relationship oriented. Leader's focus remains either on the task or his goal. His/her focus may be fixed on creating positive relationship, bonhomie and camaraderie. A leader determines situation favourableness by examining leader-member relations, task-structure and position power. In this approach Fiedler Model is very popular.

Fiedler's Contingency Model

Fiedler's contingency theory postulates that there is no single best way for managers to lead. Styles are based on the situations. Fiedler postulated three types of leadership approach-

- Leader member relations: This approach depends on the degree of confidence, trust, and respect between leaders and subordinates.
- Task structure: In this approach leader focus is on task and not on the relationship. But this approach is not applicable on all situations.
- Position power: The degree of influence a leader has over power variables, such as hiring, firing, discipline, promotions, and salary increment.

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The leader’s potential depends on the variables like leader-member relations, task structure and power position. If the leader gets support from his team members, he or she enjoys a support even to manage an unstructured task. Similarly in a situation when the task is structured, the leader can perform without the support of the other two variables. When he/she enjoys power position, he/she has the authority to reward his/her employees and work in a better way.

The relationship with the followers determines how favourable the situation is. Positive relationship builds an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence and makes the situation favourable. On the other hand, negative relationship builds an environment of reduced confidence and mutual trust thus making the situation less favourable. Similarly, the degree of complexity in a task determines the favourableness of a situation. If the task is clear and unambiguous, the favourableness increases and vice-versa. The leaders who wield power will be able to mould the situation in his/her favour. The position power also determines the favourableness of a situation (Bolden, R., Gosling, J., Marturano, & Dennison, P., 2003).

Effect of Leadership on School Environment

All these aspects of school environment revolve round the potential and the qualities of the leader. A leader plays pivotal role in making the school environment conducive for learners (Eissa, Brown, Wiseman, 2014).

In the course of his duties a leader undertakes a variety of leadership roles in order to motivate his team to perform well. He may well be undertaking several of these roles at the same time and needs to use different roles with different people. It could be useful to compare the list of roles that follows, with his own job/role description as a middle leader and to think about the most significant roles for him (Sharma and Jain, 2013).

Operational Definitions of the Study Leadership

Here leadership means the leadership of school principal. In this study the researcher follows Fiedler Model to watch leadership effectiveness. According to this model there are three factors that determine leadership effectiveness in different situation.

- a. Leader-member relation: This checks the degree of confidence, trust, and respect subordinates have in their leaders.
- b. Task structure: The degree to which the job assignments proceeds.

- c. Position power: The degree of influence a leader has over power variables, such as hiring, firing, discipline, promotions, and salary increment.

There is a tool to assess the leadership style known as Least Preferred Co-Worker scale.

Research Questions

- What is the dominant leadership approach which teachers can identify with principal as perceived by them?
- In what ways do the principal leadership approach affect school environment?

Methodology

Content Analysis

Content analysis is used for qualitative research. Content denotes what is contained and content analysis is the analysis of what is contained in a message. Broadly content analysis may be seen as a method where the content of the message forms the basis for drawing inferences and conclusions about the content (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1976). Further, content analysis falls in the interface of observation and document analysis. It is defined as a method of observation in the sense that instead of asking people to respond to questions, it “takes the communications that people have produced and asks questions of communications” (Kerlinger, 1973). Therefore, it is also considered as an unobtrusive or non-reactive method of social research.

Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion of Data

What is the dominant leadership approach which teachers can identify with principals as perceived by them?

Table 1: Dominant Leadership Approach amongst Schools’ Principals as Perceived by the Teachers

School	Score	Interpretation
1.	117.4	High LPC
2.	110.3	High LPC
3.	128	High LPC
4.	97.7	High LPC
5.	120.7	High LPC
6.	113.3	High LPC

School	Score	Interpretation
7.	79.4	High LPC
8.	81.6	High LPC
9.	52.6	Low LPC
10.	90.5	High LPC

Interpretation

Table 1 shows the dominant principal leadership approach amongst schools' principals. The table 1 demonstrates the rating of the teachers for their school principals. According to most teachers their principals are person-relationship oriented leaders. According to the Fiedler Model person-relationship oriented is best style. The result is according to Fiedler Model which contains three approaches–

High L.P.C. (Least Preferred Co-Worker scale) Person relationship oriented (64 or above), Mixed style (58-63) and Low L.P.C. person-task oriented (57 or less) and in this table dominant leadership approach is High LPC. Only teachers of one school rated their principal at low person oriented leader.

Discussion

This table shows dominant leadership approach among school principals is person relationship approach. According to Fiedler Model there are three approaches –Person relationship oriented, mixed style, and person-task oriented and in these approaches person-relationship approach is the best. Person relationship- oriented principals saw themselves as relaxed, open, and easy-going, but their teachers were dissatisfied and they communicated least of the three groups. The principals without dominant orientation communicated most frequently, particularly concerning issues of control, but teachers were not very satisfied. Task/oriented principals focused on instructions and on personal talk and left teachers more satisfied (Forsyth, Patrick B. Boshart, Donna).

The present study shows that dominant principal leadership approach is High LPC. Thus the result of this table shows that principals follow the person relationship oriented approach.

Research Question

In what ways do the Principal Leadership Approach Affect School Environment?

To find out the effect of principals leadership approach on school environment, researcher conducted in-depth interviews with all school principals of government

and private schools and on the basis of interviews and participants observation categorized them in five domains described earlier. School wise analysis of principal approach is given below:

Domain 1. Alertness/Activeness

Alertness is a very effective domain. In the present study it relates to the alertness of school principal. If the leader is alert, the whole environment will be active including teachers, students, parents and other members of the school. Alertness is a positive quality of a leader. This quality shows the enthusiastic approach of a leader who can change the whole environment of a school by this quality.

While deliberating upon observation and feedback of teachers, principal of Government school Narnaul, said that

“I personally visit the classes daily and sometimes check the homework of students and diary of teachers myself. In this way by observing students' performance, I come to know teachers' performance”.

He further said that he regularly takes meetings of staff members to find out the solution of problems. He also told that as it is a government school, so there is no facility of CCTV cameras. Principals of government school of Nizampur, Bhagwadi, Bhungarka and Mandhana also have the similar point of view regarding feedback and observation of teachers in their schools. Most of the principals of government school said that they don't have CCTV cameras and it impacts their observation affecting the alertness of principal. The principal of Arohi model school, Mandhana showed a register in which the record of all students of the whole session was available. He said that

“I take stock of the Progress of each student and if a teacher fails to achieve the target then I suggest him or her, a right way or methodology”.

The alertness of the school principals affects the learning outcome of students. Structural equation models (SEM) can be helpful for the observation of students by school principals. The SEM models reveal both direct and indirect effects of leadership on a range of school and classroom processes that in turn predicted changes (improvements) in schools' academic performance. The SEMs also suggest certain instructional strategies for school principals who can help in enhancing students learning outcome (Sammons, Gu, Day, Ko, 2011).

Domain II. Motivation

Motivation is one of the most frequently used words in psychology. It refers to the factors that move or activate the organism. We infer the presence of motivation when we see that people work towards certain goals. For example, we might observe a student works hard at almost every task that comes to him/her; from this we infer that the person has a motive to achieve. All human behaviour appears to arise in response to some form of internal (physiological) or external (environmental) stimulation. The behaviours, however, are not random. They often involve some purpose or goal. It is often held behaviours take place as a result of the arousal of certain motives. Thus motivation can be defined as the process of activating, maintaining and directing behaviour towards a particular goal. The process is usually terminated once the desired goal is attained by the person.

On the discussion of motivation of teachers the principal of government school of Narnaul told that he motivates the teachers by praising them in morning assembly and meetings. He said that,

“This is a government school so it is the responsibility of the higher officials to reward the teachers who do well.”

He expressed his helplessness as he was bound by directions from his senior bosses. All principals of government schools are having similar opinions. The researcher observed that his body gestures looked very cold. When other teachers were consulted, they also gave almost same response and echoed what other principal had said Motivation can bring a very good change in the attitude of teachers and it affects the outcome of students.

The principal of government school Bhungarka told he gives rewards to the teachers in Gram Panchayat or in annual function. He also told he tests the knowledge of a teacher and if he is good in some other subject, then he also gives him the responsibility of teaching other subject as well besides his main subject. He said that

“In our school an English teacher is taking the classes of Social science because I was not satisfied with the work of Social Science teacher.”

If the personality traits exhibited by the principal are harsh then it demotivates their subordinates. Subordinates must be involved while taking vital decision. There should be free flow of information to every teacher (*O. Adegbesan, 2013*).

Motivation affects the principal’s own potential and teacher’s and students’ academic performance. Principals

did not want to be held accountable themselves, as there were too many factors outside their control (*Jan Heystek, 2015*).

While having discussion with the principal of government Senior Secondary School, he told that to update the knowledge of teachers he suggests them to keep in touch with latest technology, and they should attend seminars and conferences if they get any chance to attend. They should read books and newspapers. His suggestions are good. It was observed by the researcher that some teachers were not happy with the principal due to the biased attitude he adopts in certain matters. In spite of this they appreciated his quality of punctuality and discipline. All principals of government and private schools gave almost similar statement on the suggestion or advise to update the knowledge of teachers. All included the use of newspapers, internet, social sites etc. as their suggestions.

After consultation with the teachers, it was found that if a teacher does well then management gives a big increment in his salary. To motivate students he organizes many co-curricular activities and giving a chance to them to face stage so that their fear of stage can be removed. Shared and instructionally focussed leadership are complementary approaches for improving schools. Various leadership variables are positively associated with positive outcome of students (*Louisa, Dretzkea & Wahlstrom, 2010*).

Domain III. Democratic Approach

Democratic leadership involves a team guided by a leader where all individuals are involved in the decision-making process to determine what needs to be done and how it should be done. The group’s leader has the authority to make the final decision for the group. Every human being is unique and different and has some special quality and this type of quality comes out when a leader gives him or her chance to prove loyalty.

The principal of government school of Narnaul told he takes a meeting when he feels its need. But after consulting his teachers it was found that he takes meetings only when some special issue is to be discussed or the principal wants to give certain information or the instructions. Regarding taking suggestions from the teachers in decision making, he told that

“Mainly I take the suggestions from some senior teachers because they are experienced and they can understand things better.”

He takes meetings if he is in a dilemma or faces some problems and takes the suggestions from teachers.

The outcome of this questioning clearly hinted that the principal does not adopt a democratic approach. He is somewhat biased in his approach towards a few and overlooks the others. He does not involve all his teachers and staff members in decision making. The principal of government school of Nizampur told he takes meetings for a particular issue, but not very frequently. At the question of suggestions, he told that he involved all teachers and staff members and discussed the issues with them. Teachers can give their suggestions.

The principal of Arohi Model School said,

“I take suggestions from teachers to improve the learning level of students. In meetings we discuss the problems and all teachers suggest the solution. At last I take a final decision on which all agree”.

Regarding autonomy of teachers the principal of government school, Narnaul told he does not provide full autonomy to his teachers because his school is a government run school and he cannot provide them full freedom. Syllabus is provided to them by Board of School Education, Haryana, so the teachers have to follow that strictly. But his teachers use the methods of their own choice and in their classes they are free to choose any method but it should be latest and the students should feel comfortable with his methodology. When staff members were questioned in this regard, it was found that they can adopt any method of teaching in their classrooms. He told that he likes democratic approach. The principal of government school, Nizampur told each and every type of autonomy is provided to the teachers regarding curriculum implementation. All have fully democratic environment rights.

The principal of Shiwalik Shiksha Nikentan said on subject of meetings that other staff members can give their suggestions and discuss problems in meetings. With regard to autonomy, the principal told he has not provided any type of freedom, he guides them and they teach according to the directions of the principal. Teachers and other staff members can suggest but he is not bound to take their suggestions seriously. From the point of view of the principal, a leader should be very strict and should use autocratic style otherwise there will be chaos in the whole system. According to him

“Strict discipline is very much important in private sector, otherwise a private institution cannot run successfully”.

Though many leadership styles are in vogue but autocratic style dominates. The principal of Saraswati

Senior Secondary School told on the matter of autonomy, teachers are free to choose any teaching method; they can exchange their classes if they have any problem. The principal told, he does not involve other staff members in meetings and decision making as it being a private institution. The principal told that the principal should be democratic with teachers and students. He said that

“A principal should take suggestions from all teachers because all teachers have some qualities”.

Principals use 50.9% autocratic leadership style, 36.3% use democratic while 12.8% use laissez faire leadership style. Majority of principals are using autocratic leadership style to manage their schools (Linnet Afandi Budohi, 2014).

Domain IV. Delegative Approach

The principal of government Senior Secondary School, Narnaul told he delegates responsibility to his teachers. He told that he has formed many committees like SMDC (School Management Development committee), SMC (School Management Committee), PTA (parents teachers association) etc. SMDC suggests new ideas to develop the school and for its improvement. PTA involves parents where they find a platform to provide important inputs and suggestions. The participant principal told he made committees whenever he faced any problem. Each committee involves minimum 5 members. When his teachers were consulted, it was learnt that there were many committees who were delegated power. This is transformational type of quality. If all teachers find chances to improve they feel good and satisfied. The principal of government school Nizampur told he has delegated his powers to his teachers. He said that he has made many committees like School Management Committee, Institutional Planning Committee, School Development Committee, Quality Improvement Committee, School Discipline Committee, Sports and Cultural Committee. He told he seeks help for these committees from students of different houses and teachers. Teachers join committees according to their interest and comfort. The principal of government school, Bhagwadi told he makes committees when he feels its need and teachers are the members of these committees. The principal of Arohi Model School told there were many committees like sexual harassment committee, purchase committee, PTM committee etc. In these committees all teachers are members. Work is given according to the interest and talent of the teachers. After talking with his staff members it was found he is very delegative in his approach.

The principal of Yadhuvanshi Siksha Niketan told there are many committees in the school like management committee, NTSE committee (National Talent Search Committee). The principal makes committees for different areas wherever it is needed (Science committee, Maths committee etc). Work is distributed according to the talent of teachers. Here principal uses transformational leadership style. In this approach teachers feel comfortable. Transaction and transformation leadership styles are in trend these days. Transaction leadership, transformational and laissez-faire styles have a positive and significant impact on teachers' job satisfaction. Teachers feel at ease and satisfied with their job when their principal uses these leadership styles. (Ali Yassin Sheikh Ali & Abdulkadir Mohamud Dahie, 2015). Transformational leadership is necessary, but insufficient condition for instructional leadership. When transformational and shared instructional leadership coexist in an integrated form of leadership, the influence on school performance, measured by the quality of its pedagogy and the achievement of its students, is substantial (Helen M. Marks & Susan M. Printy, 2003).

Domain V. Harmonious

For a cool and healthy environment this is again a very effective domain. It is the responsibility of a leader to have or maintain healthy relations with all members. Regarding how the principal interacts with parents and students, the principal of government school Narnaul told he meets his students in morning assembly and addresses them. The students can come to him at any time if they have any problem. Teachers are also free to come to him and tell their problems. To interact with parents the principal holds Parents Teachers Meetings. Parents can come to him at anytime and tell their problems. Teachers also corroborated the same.

The principal of Government Senior Secondary School, Nizampur told he meets his students in morning assembly and students can come to him any time.

“And parents meet me in PTM and they come to me any time”.

The principal interacts with the students in morning assembly and visits the classes. Besides this he takes classes himself and it was observed by the researcher that he took classes and resorted to corporeal punishment. This is a very negative aspect of his leadership. He told students can come to him if they found any problem.

Parents can meet in PTM and they can come at any time in school hours. Besides this school organizes many

functions or programs and invites parents. Parents come and meet and give suggestions and share problems if they have any. After observation, it was found the school organizes many functions and calls parents. The researcher also attended a New Year Function being organized in the school and witnessed it in newspapers and got it confirmed from some parents.

Principal's interaction with teachers, parents and students is necessary as they are interrelated with one another. There is a direct relationship between principal, students and society (Heather E. Price, 2015).

Generalization of the Interpretation

Domain I. Alertness/Activeness

From the above interpretation it is found that all principals are alert and active. But the principals of private schools are more active. They observe classes and the school premises through CCTV cameras but government schools don't have this facility. Private schools take extra meetings while the government schools are lacking in this area.

Domain II. Motivation

All leaders don't motivate much. The principals of government schools are bound by the directions and orders of the higher officials and the policies of the government. The principals of private schools sometimes give increment in salary as a reward. On the matter of updating the knowledge of teachers, all principals advise their teachers to update their own knowledge, and advise them to keep in touch with latest technology. But no leader arranges any programme to update their knowledge. They don't take initiatives.

Domain III. Democratic Approach

On the matter of meetings, the leaders of government schools are more democratic and they discuss all matters with their teachers. But the leaders of private schools take the suggestions of the teachers only in limited matters and they don't involve them in decision making as they are also bound by rules and directions of the management. In government schools, the principal is the highest person at the helm. He has the cudgels up in his hands for taking instant decisions, but in private schools the principal is not the main person, he is merely a rubber stamp of the management in most of the matters. He has to look to the management for his decision making.

The principals of government schools prefer democratic style and the leaders of private schools prefer autocratic style directly or indirectly.

Domain IV. Delegative Approach

On the issue of delegative approach, the leaders of private schools belonging to rural areas do not delegate their powers as these are not big names. But the principals of private schools in urban area, delegate their powers in certain matters. The principals of government schools delegate their powers. All leaders interact with parents and students in the same way. The principals of private schools organize more extra co-curricular activities than the principals of government schools.

Domain V. Harmonious

On the subject of harmony, private schools are in better condition than government schools. They held PTM more frequently than government schools. They keep in touch with parents also.

Conclusion

The present study found in most of the instances most of school principals are person oriented. However, principals of private schools believe more in contacting and maintaining relationship with teachers and students' parents. Principals of private schools view consistent co-curricular activities and interaction with students as a way to achieve development of their school. However, principals in rural areas don't delegate their powers to staff. During observation it was also found that many of the principals were authoritative in their working. The research findings of the study suggest personal experience (Crow, 2007) of principal and his perception affects the environment, which needs to be extensively studied to improve school environment. Thus present research could be used to prepare aspiring leadership in education.

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