Identifying leadership style and its impact on institutional climate: a study in education sector

Harminder Kaur Gujral* and Jaideep Kaur

Amity Business School, Amity University.

ABSTRACT

The rationale of the present research is to understand how and to what extent a particular leadership style can affect the climate of the organization. And further to find out the most popular form of leadership on the basis of data collected from both public and private sectors respectively. The real leadership is measured by its impact on others and in creating organizational climate which focuses on employee wellbeing. The questionnaire was conducted on 105senior personnel in education sector to determine their leadership style and further to study the effectiveness of each style on the climate of the organization. Results: There is a difference in leadership styles of different educational institutes and in turn their impact on climate of the institute. The leadership styles prominently emerging are participative and catalytic. Implication: Success of the organization depends on its leader. Participative leaders are those who involve other people in the process, including their subordinates, peers, superiors and other stakeholders. The Catalyst Leaders are visionary, they have facilitative, innovative, inspiring vision and empower people to transform the vision into reality. The paper reports that the different leadership styles create different type of climate which is responsible for the over all wellbeing of the employees and the institute. In today's world successful leaders are those who provide opportunity and training to everyone to develop to the next level.

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Introduction

Leadership is the process of social influence as the behavior of the leader affects the followers' behavior to a great extent. Leader is the member of the group or organization who plays an important role in influencing the behavior of the members of group or organization. Udai Pareek (2007) defines leadership as the act of making an impact on others in a desired direction. A leader defines the vision, determines the mission and persuades people to go in a certain direction that they may not have wanted to go. Leadership style is the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. Kurt Lewin (1939) led a group of researchers to identify different styles of leadership. This early study has been very influential and established three major leadership styles - Authoritarian or autocratic, Participative or democratic and Delegative or Free Reign. Although all three styles reflect in good leadership, with one of them normally dominant. There are many ways to lead and every leader has his own style. Some of the more common styles include autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. In the past several decades, management experts have undergone a revolution in how they define leadership and their attitude towards it. They have gone from a very classical autocratic approach to a very creative participative approach and it was determined that different styles were needed for different situations and each leader needed to know when to exhibit a particular approach.

Authoritarian or autocratic style is reflected when leaders tell their employees what they want and how they want it accomplished, without taking the opinion of their followers. Some of the appropriate conditions for this leadership style are,

when you have all the information to solve the problem, you are short on time, and your employees are well motivated. Some people tend to think of this style as a vehicle for yelling, using demeaning language, and leading by threats and abusing their power. This is not the authoritarian style, rather it is an abusive, unprofessional style called "bossing people around." It has no place in a leader's repertoire.

Participative or Democratic style involves the leader including one or more employees in the decision making process (determining what to do and how to do it). However, the leader maintains the final decision making authority. Exhibiting this style is not a sign of weakness; rather it is a sign of strength and your employees respect it. This is normally reflected when you have part of the information, and your employees have other parts, as the leader is not expected to know everything — this is why you employ knowledgeable and skillful employees. Using this style is of mutual benefit, it allows them to become part of the team and allows you to make better decisions.

The democratic leadership style is also called the participative style as it encourages employees to be a part of the decision making. The democratic manager keeps his employees informed about everything that affects their work and shares decision making and problem solving responsibilities. This style requires the leader to be a coach who has the final say, but also gathers information from staff members before making a decision.

Democratic leadership can produce high quality and high quantity work for long periods of time.

Delegative leaders offer little or no guidance to group members and leave decision-making up to group members.

While this style can be effective in situations where group members are highly qualified, knowledgeable, highly skilled, motivated and capable of working on their own. While the conventional term for this style is 'laissez-faire' and implies a completely hands-off approach, still many leaders remain open and available to group members for consultation and feedback.Leadership effectiveness depends on the use of a style appropriate to the situation.

Climate can be defined as the perceived attributes of an organization and its subsystems as reflected in the way an organization deals with its members, groups, and issues. Udai Pareek (2007). The organizational climate factors which motivate employees are clarity, standards, responsibility, flexibility, rewards and recognition and commitment. The present study is mainly conducted keeping in mind majorly three leadership styles – authoritarian or autocratic, participative or democratic, delegative or free reign and their impact on organizational climate. The Extensive study by Rao T.V (2002) attempts to identify the impact of three different leadership styles on the learning climate generated in the organization as perceived by 48 top level managers in a company. The leadership styles studied are: benevolent or paternalistic style, critical style and developmental style. The study indicated that while benevolent style creates dependence and resentment, critical style creates resentment and it is developmental style that tends to creates learning and job satisfaction.

Research published in Wireless Communications, Networking and Mobile Computing Magazine (2008) examines the status quo of Chinese enterprise reform and whether leadership style influences organizational change in China. Hierarchical regression results during the research showed that the effects of organizational change in government agencies and joint ventures were significantly better than those in state-owned organizations. The findings indicated that both transformational leadership and transactional leadership have positive impact on organizational change and transformational leadership has significant and positive relationships with both organizational change and organizational performance, and organizational change mediates the relationship between organizational performance and transformational leadership. Due to increased competition it is becoming important for the organizations to transform and go beyond their traditional management practices. Leaders also feel pressurized to find high performance and transformational characteristics in them. When compared to transactional leadership, innovation is encouraged with the help of transformational leadership (Howell & Avolio, 1993). Transformational leaders are future oriented, concerned about planning, open-minded, and energetic. The leaders with this style become role models for their subordinates by gaining their trust and confidence. They seek new and unconventional ways of working, build employees morale, and commitment. Such leaders encourage subordinates to think beyond themselves and become high performers (Bass, 1985). Ekvall, G., & R Hammar(1998) proposed to study the influence of leadership style on organizational outcomes and found that the behavioral style of the managers affects organizational results only through influencing the social climate. Tayyab (2009) proposed to examine the relationship of organizational culture and knowledge management processes in the corporate sector of Pakistan. Another objective of the study was to explore the impact of management level on knowledge management processes. The findings of this research suggest the role of key organizational culture attributes in the successful implementation of knowledge management initiatives.

Imran & Haque (2011) conducted a research which conceptualized organizational climate as a mediator between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior. Results revealed partial mediating role of open system model and fully mediating role of rational goal model of organizational climate in relationship between transformational leadership and innovative work behavior. A recent research published in Times of India (10th april.2013) reveals that 55% leaders globally are using leadership styles that create demotivating climates at the work place. 36% of leaders have mastered none or only one leadership style, 19% of leaders are fostering high performance workplaces, 48% of Asian leaders are using the coercive style of leadership and compared to the global average of 55, leaders in India are far from the ideal workplace environment, with 70% of the leaders found creating a demotivating climate for their employeese. The present study is also an effort to identify leadership style and its impact on institutional climate.

Objectives

• To identify the Leadership Styles in different sectors of educational institutes

• To analyze the effectiveness of different leadership styles on institutional climate of different sectors of education

Research methods

Descriptive Research

Target population: People holding positions of leadership in Educational Institutes.

Sample Technique: convenience sampling

Sample Size: 105

Instrument : The Questionnaire was in two parts. Part A measures the leadership style of the respondent and Part B measures the effectiveness of each leadership style on organizational climate.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Leadership Questionnaire was the source of primary data collection for present research and the data collected was analyzed with the help of statistical tool SPSS.

Interpretation – The obtained value of Cronbach's Alpha reflects the high reliability of the questionnaire.

Leadership styles

Interpretation: The table shows the Leadership Styles of the respondents recorded through the Part A of the questionnaire. Out of 105 respondents, 32 have a participative style, 28 have catalytic style, 23 are directive and 22 are non directive in their style

Interpretation: Leaders in the public sector have directive as well non directive style as compared to the private sector where the leadership styles which emerged were participative and catalytic.

Leadership style and its impact on institutional climate

Analysis was conducted to study the impact of different leadership styles on the climate of the institutions and the parameters which showed significant difference in creating impact on the climate have been considered for analysis.

Interpretation: The participative and catalytic style leaders usually provide a challenging work environment to their subordinates, where as the leaders adopting directive style occasionally provide a challenging environment to their subordinates to use their skills fully whereas a non directive style fairly provide such an environment.

Table 1: Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.923	.884	35

Table 2: Frequency distribution of different Leadership Styles:

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Directive	23	21.9	21.9	21.9
	Participative	32	30.5	30.5	52.4
	Catalytic	28	26.7	26.7	79.0
	Non-Directive	22	21.0	21.0	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: Leadership style in private and public sector

Sector to which the Educational Institutions belong			Usually if not always	Fairly often	Occasionally	Rarely if ever	Total
Public Sector	Leadership Style	Directive		7	10	6	23
		Non-Directive		6	14	2	22
	Total			13	24	8	45
Private Sector	Leadership Style	Participative	17	15	0		32
		Catalytic	7	16	5		28
	Total		24	31	5		60

Table 4 : Summary of findings from research question

Count

		challenging work environment				
		Usually if not always	Fairly often	Occasionally	Rarely if ever	Total
Leadership Style	Directive	0	0	19	4	23
	Participative	27	5	0	0	32
	Catalytic	15	13	0	0	28
	Non-Directive	6	10	4	2	22
Total		49	27	23	6	105

Table 5 : summary of findings from research question

Count

		focus on driving results				
		Usually if not always	Fairly often	Occasionally	Rarely if ever	Total
Leadership Style	Directive	0	7	10	6	23
	Participative	17	15	0	0	32
	Catalytic	7	16	5	0	28
	Non-Directive	0	6	14	2	22
Total		24	44	29	8	105

Table 6: Summary of findings from research question

Count

		motivation to achieve targets				
		Usually if not always	Fairly often	Occasionally	Rarely if ever	Total
Leadership Style	Directive	0	2	13	8	23
	Participative	10	22	0	0	32
	Catalytic	17	11	0	0	28
	Non-Directive	0	14	2	6	22
Total		27	49	15	14	105

Table 7: Summary of findings from research question

Count

		Consultation in decisions making				
		Usually if not always	Fairly often	Occasionally	Rarely if ever	Total
Leadership Style	Directive	0	10	4	9	23
	Participative	20	12	0	0	32
	Catalytic	7	19	2	0	28
	Non-Directive	8	2	12	0	22
Total		35	43	18	9	105

Table 8: summary of findings from research question

Count

		Flexibility for innovation and creativity				
		Usually if not always	Fairly often	Occasionally	Rarely if ever	Total
Leadership Style	Directive	0	2	11	10	23
	Participative	19	13	0	0	32
	Catalytic	13	11	4	0	28
	Non-Directive	22	0	0	0	22
Total		54	26	15	10	105

Table 9: Summary of findings from research question

Count

		trust and admiration				
		Usually if not always	Fairly often	Occasionally	Rarely if ever	Total
Leadership Style	Directive	0	4	12	7	23
	Participative	18	14	0	0	32
	Catalytic	7	19	2	0	28
	Non-Directive	2	6	8	6	22
Total		27	43	22	13	105

Table 10: summary of findings from research question

Count

		Participation in goal setting				
		Usually if not always	Fairly often	Occasionally	Rarely if ever	Total
Leadership Style	Directive	0	4	5	14	23
	Participative	9	23	0	0	32
	Catalytic	14	12	2	0	28
	Non-Directive	0	4	14	4	22
Total		23	43	21	18	105

Interpretation: Majority of leaders following directive or non directive leadership style say that their subordinates work in an efficient manner occasionally whereas those following a participative style say that their subordinates usually or often display efficiency in their work and catalytic style fairly say that their employees often display a result driven attitude.

Interpretation: Subordinates having participative and non directive leaders are often motivated to achieve targets on time whereas those having catalytic leaders are usually motivated. Leaders who follow directive style mostly feel that their subordinates are motivated occasionally only.

Interpretation: Leaders who follow a participative or a catalytic style of leadership consult with their subordinates on a more regular basis before making important departmental decisions than the other two types of leaders.

Interpretation: Non directive leaders score the highest on flexibility since their style of work involves a lot of delegation and hence all such leaders have given an unanimous response that they usually give flexibility to their subordinates to implement their creative ideas and innovate. Most of the participative and catalytic leaders also fall in the same category.

Interpretation: Participative and catalytic leaders share a bond of mutual trust and admiration with their employees more often than the other two styles for which this is only an occasional feature.

Interpretation: Participative and catalytic leaders usually or often ensure mutual goal setting with their subordinates whereas the directive leaders rarely do so and the non directive leaders do this occasionally.

Conclusion

The present research was focused on identifying leadership styles and its impact on the institutional climate in education sector. Based on analysis the leadership styles which emerged were Directive, Participative, Catalytic and Non-Directive. The leaders in the Public Sector mainly followed a directive style where they preferred their subordinates to follow a standardized procedure of taking instructions and working accordingly. In private organizations the leaders follow either a participative or a catalytic style.

Since participative and catalytic styles of leadership are more employee friendly, hence employees seem to be more empowered and motivated. Their ability to think creatively and drive results is more in comparison to those employees whose leaders follow a directive style. These styles drive better climate in the organizations which leads to innovation, recognition, creativity, efficiency, trust, empowerment resulting in enhanced organizational performance.

The present research is supported by the study of Rao & Rao (2002) where they clearly demonstrated that developmental style is the most desirable style and it is associated with creation of empowerment, growth, learning, morale and satisfaction on part of the employees.

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