A Study on Leadership Strategies Used In Maharashtra Board Schools in Pune

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Abstract **Leadership from an organizational perspective is an art that influences people to attain an objective of an organization. Leadership does not belong to any one person. "Individual people do not posses leadership; leadership happens when people participate in collaborative forms of thoughts and action. Leadership strategies and values are indispensable in all disciplines. Education, the process that makes a man complete is also an important field where leadership creates a great impact. This essay discusses in detail the leadership values adapted at schools with particular reference to Pune, India, and their impact on the students and the organization as a whole. Further, this report also gives a set of strategies to be adapted by board of management of schools in refining its leadership strategies and in order to improve the overall quality of education.**

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AN INTRODUCTION TO STATE BOARD SCHOOLS IN PUNE

School education system in India has grown at a phenomenal rate during the post-independence period. The number of institution has increased multifold in the last five decades with the student and teacher population running in millions. The system has also become very complex over the years due to several efforts of the government to bring qualitative improvement.

Managing a huge and complex education system of this kind also warrants a corresponding adaption in the management framework to keep up with the changing times. Somehow, the desired changes have not taken place. It is often felt that the existing management system, as a result, is unable to cope up with the complexities involved. The economic considerations have future cast a doubt on the viability of the ever-expanding administrative machinery.

The national policy of Education (1986) as well as the revised policy adopted in 1992 called for an overhauling of the school education management framework and suggested major re-structuring to re-energies the system. The idea of re-organization as visualized in the National policy on education was to de-link the educational management from political governance.

The new structures of decentralized management, as envisaged in the policy included the District Boards of Education that were to be constituted; creation of school complexes and the village education committees. To reform teacher education, creation of the District Institute of Educational and Training was also planned with a view to make these as nodal institution to serve the district

needs have academic and resource support and adult education.

Further India's commitment to provide 'Education for All' has also highlighted the need for structural and organizational changes in school management. Another significant development that has a bearing on educational management is the second-time revival of interest in Panchayat Raj institution brought in this time through the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution with the result, since 1994 when these amendments were made, some efforts of decentralization by involving the elected representatives of people in educational decision-making at the district and sub district level are visible in some states, for instance in Madhya Pradesh and Kerala.

During the 1990s, many international agencies came forward to invest funds for strengthening primary education, endorsing the need for decentralization of educational management and community participation. Given this context, there is a need to build continuously to reform the existing management of school education system.

Maharashtra State Board of Secondary Education, Pune and Divisional Boards were established under the Maharashtra Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board Act, 1965. There are three Divisional Boards at Poona, Nagpur and Aurangabad for revenue division of Poona, Bombay, Nagpur, and Aurangabad respectively as found under the Maharashtra Land Revenue Code, 1966. The Divisional Board is headed by the Chairman and has

Secretary, Joint secretary, Deputy Secretary, and officers and staff.

As per the Maharashtra Act No XLI of 1965, establishing the Maharashtra Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board and subsequent amendments namely, Maharashtra 26 0f 1969, 39 of 1971 and 6 of 1977 it can be understood that that there are following Boards serving the interest of school education in erstwhile State of Bombay:

(a) Bombay Secondary School Certificate Examination Board Act, 1948

(b) Madhya Pradesh secondary Education Board Act, 1951

(c) Maharashtra Secondary School Certificate Examination Board

(d) Vidarbha Board of Secondary Education

(e) Maharashtra Secondary School Code (1963-64)

Practically there were two main boards Maharashtra and Vidharbha operating in the state. The Bombay Government constituted a committee, "The Bombay Government Integration Committee", which recommended that there should be only one board for the entire state. Accordingly the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary Education was established under the Act XLI of 1965. The Act was further amended vide Maharashtra Act No.6 of 1977 to include Higher Secondary Education under the Board.

MANAGEMENT SYSTEM OF THE SCHOOLS

India is a federal state consisting of 35 states and union territories. There are about 29 official languages spoken and written across the country. The current population of India is 1.16 billion, about 16 % of the world's population. About 30% of India's populations are in the age group of 15-18. About 1.2 million schools with over 5 million teachers cover approximately 600,000 villages across 7000 blocks further grouped into over 600 districts across the 35 states and union territories. The coverage extends to nearly 180 million enrolments with a major focus on primary and upper primary schools. The data suggest that despite the extremely focused approach of the past two decades, a lot more needs to be achieved. The dropout rates are high: as many as 30% of the pupils drop out during primary school. About 17% drop in the transition to upper primary. Only about 30.5 million or between 15-20% reach the higher secondary school level owing to poor socio-economic status.

SCHOOL BRANDS

There are many formal systems in place that govern and guide education in India. Some of these are:

a. The central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) that governs schools at a national level

b. The state-Government Boards – that govern state runs school

c. The Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (ICSE) Board that governs affiliated school across India

d. International school affiliated to the International Baccalaureate (IB) programmer

This document restricts itself to schools in the urban centers, particularly those governed by the CBSE, although other systems are similar in nature and curriculum. The National Council evolved the National Curriculum framework in the year 2005 with the following board guidelines for science education:

- Content, process and language of science teaching must be commensurate with the learners age-range and cognitive reach

- Science teaching should engage the learners in acquiring methods and processes that will nurture their curiosity and creativity, particularly in relation to the environment

- Science teaching should be placed in the wider context of children's environment to equip them with the requisite knowledge and skills to enter the world of work

- Awareness of environmental concerns must permeate the entire school curriculum

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Typically, schools follow the April-March calendar with three Holiday's breaks equally about three months across the year. On an average, the school begins at 7.45 am and ends around 2p.m. each period is about 35-40 minutes.

SCHOOL STRUCTURE

The different levels of the Indian educational system are as follows:

- Elementary [pre-Nursery to Kindergarten] (ages 2-5)

- Primary (ages 6-10)

- Upper primary (ages 11-13)

- Secondary (ages 14-15)

- Higher secondary (ages 16-17)

This pattern is followed by a majority of states and union territories. Others have the same categorization, however may include a different age-mix. For example, a state may define the primary level as corresponding to ages 6-9 instead of ages 6-10.

ENROLLMENT POLICY

Enrollment is done by age i.e. age-grade matrix, sex (boys/girls), grades (I to XII), subjects, area (rural/urban) and institutional-wise (primary, middle etc.); average daily attendance; enrolment of SC and ST population; admission data (entry rate) and data on various courses; out-of school children in different age groups, repeaters and drop-outs by age , grade and sex and transition rates by sex and terminal classes and scholarships granted and number of beneficiaries under different schemes.

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Teaching staff are chosen by age and sex, rural/urban, grade and scales of pay, subjects, qualifications and experience, trained and untrained and stage for which employed, attrition rate, Operation Blackboard information on teachers post: sanctioned, appointed and transferred, teacher-training institutions, persons trained and type of training.

EXAMINATION

Examinations are conducted for all classes, evaluations are done without bias and the results are published through online or offline media.

LEADERSHIP VALUES IN THE SCHOOLS AT PRESENT

Leadership value at schools in India has moved historically from being the property of a dominant class of being the practice of a dominant leader (Dimmock, 2000). It has moved again from being the practice of a dominant leader to being shared enterprise with teachers and school governs, now, in an era of democratic account ability in schooling, it has to construct new relationships, these can only be short-term tactical maneuvers'. If head teacher are as educational leaders, the providers of strategic visions and the articulators of fundamental principles, then it is clear that they have a crucial role in the transition of English schooling to greater democratic accountability in some form. At this present juncture, the strategic choice appears to be a democratic accountability mediated by a relationship with democratic community.

Contemporary thinking about leadership espouses the importance of leaders developing a values base on which to build their strategies, priorities and styles. Attempts to explicate the type of leadership appropriate for contemporary school need to provide an underpinning rationale, philosophy or justification the perspective adopted by this authors views leadership as a highly connected phenomenon (to other processes and activities) and one which is largely derived from them. Accordingly, in advocating a perspective of leadership, there is need to look at its purpose, aims and ends. As Covey (1990) aptly reminds us, it is wise to start with the end in mind. It follows that since the purposes and aims may change with time, so may the preferred version of leadership.

To what purposes and aims is leadership geared? There can be no more important answer to this than the connection it enjoys to the organization- to school or college - being led. Thus, in espousing a view on the nature of leadership, it is necessary to envision the type of school we, that is, society wants. Murphy (1992) recognized this important tenet more than a decade ago. Thus, the problematic issue of what should be the nature of leadership can be addressed through the following questions: how do we want our future schools to look? What is expected of our future schools? What kind of education do we want schools to provide? What values, knowledge and skills do we expect students to acquire? In short, what kind of graduates do we advocate of our schools?

Answer to these questions provides some powerful insights into the type of leadership required of our schools. Hence the claim that leadership is a connected and derived concept, being dependent on the bigger and more crucial issue of what is meant by successful, quality schools for the present and for the future and what type of leadership is necessary to their materialization. The importance of values, and their influence on leadership, is central to this approach, since values undergird the visions of future schools and schooling. It is to these visions and their associated leader functions stick upon.

Leaders promote practices in their schools that are based on evidence informed, research- validated approaches. They also respect and value intuition and experience. As learners themselves, leaders demonstrate that they value the importance of research findings as guides to informed practice and future innovation. They encourage teachers to be cognizant of research on effective teaching and learning by obtaining and disseminating relevant literature and by resourcing and arranging staff development to keep staff informed (Duke, 1987) in addition, they familiarize themselves with research on principal effectiveness, school effectiveness and school improvement, and seek appropriate opportunities to apply important findings. They

demonstrate through their own behavior the value they place on reading, understanding, reflecting, conceptualizing and transforming ideas into practice.

If leadership is focused on core processes of learning and teaching, it has also to be concerned with the organizational structures that enable the processes. The configuration of structures should support, not hinder, the delivery of a quality curriculum to all students. In traditional schools, structures such as standard lesson times, inflexible standardized curricula, regimented timetables and school routines have come to govern decisions about core technology. Leaders may thus need to dismantle existing dysfunctional structures. This calls for an understanding of alternatives structures and their likely impact on, and ability to allow flexibility in furthering, the cause of promoting learning (Murphy et al, 1985).

Concern for culture is acknowledged as one of the key roles leaders play. Tight coupling and synergy is achieved when all parts of a school share common values, goals and practices. A strong, tightly knit organizational culture helps dismantle the barriers and internal divisions which often characterize schools (Wilson and Firestone, 1987). New configuration of teaching and learning are dependent on building a culture that supports learning for all and values productive human relations. Effective schools leaders recognize the multiple and mutually reinforcing strategies available to them in building supportive learning and collegial cultures. These range from more explicit forums of verbal communication with all groups in the school community, to modeling and demonstrating through their own behaviors, as well as more subtle uses of symbols, ceremonies and rituals. High but realistic learning expectations are conveyed, rewards, recognition and resources for learning are provided and learning time protected (Levine and Lezotte, 1990).

Effective leadership of human resources is likely to be supportive of improved levels of learning productivity in schools. Such leadership motivates effective teaching and learning, enthusing people to capitalize on the virtues of working collaboratively. Leaders provide teachers with opportunity to develop collaboratively and individually as reflective practitioners. Human resources are used to maximum effect, securing synergy of effort through collaboration. Elmore et al (1996), claims that good leaders connect school-based management with school improvement and core technology. Thus, financial management is conceived more in terms of how it can influence resource allocation to enhance the core technology and student outcomes than for its intrinsic importance. Resources levels are carefully considered in relation to student need and learning outcomes.

To summarize, effective leaders monitor and review performance at whole-school and sub-levels (Leithwood and Steinbach, 1993). They realize the importance of monitoring and reviewing as prerequisites for providing feedback and positive reinforcement, both of which are consistently found among the factors contributing highly to learning (Fraser et al, 1987). In their capacity as leaders, they give abundant feedback and positive reinforcement to teachers and students, and at the same time build the culture for these behaviors to permeate all levels and members of the school community

IMPACT OF THESE STRATEGIES ON THE STUDENTS

In earlier work on educational leadership, Walker and Dimmock (2000), in concert with an assembled panel of experienced principals, professional developers, policy-makers and academic identified four interrelated components of what they termed 'key qualities' for leadership. These were values, knowledge skills and attributes. All four, it was argued, needed to be meaningful and professionally relevant. The 'expert' panel was then charged with identifying particular core values, professional knowledge, skills and attributes deemed to be control to contemporary school leaders. The result of their deliberations is given below. While these are not claimed to be exclusive, they provide a useful framework for conceptualizing essential leader qualities. A key question is the extent to which the values, knowledge, skills and attributes are through to be generic and cross-cultural, given the tensions discussed in the earlier part of this chapter. The panel assumed that they were mostly generic, since they are responses to the needs for school improvement more than particularities of culture. They thought, however that cultural difference would be more likely to affect how all four components were expressed and exercised.

Schools perform well when leaders recognize the need for agreement on goals, when resources are allocated to support goal achievement and when all parts of the school work consistently and collaboratively towards the same ends (Young and Knight, 1993). Purposeful professional development is accorded a key role in resource allocation.

In the learning-centered schools, leaders deliberately and consciously demonstrate in their own professional work the core values and behaviors they wish to promulgate in others. They mould the behaviors and values they advocate for teachers and students (Dimmock, 1995). With the leader as role model, desirable values and practices are deliberately replicated at different levels. In advocating a school focuses on student learning effective principals and teachers approach their own professional work with a learning orientation (Barth, 1990).

Finally, due to recognition should be given to leadership capacity to mould multicultural school communities into harmonious learning environments (Deal and Peterson, 1994). Most of the aforementioned functions are involved in this, especially the building of learning cultures, the modeling of certain behaviors and focus on the learning of all. Increasingly in future leadership will involve a cultural sensitivity and appreciation such that the cultural diversity of school communities is seed as a rich resource to be tapped rather than a problem to be concealed. Leaders will need to ensure that schools engage cultural diversity through the curriculum, in teaching and learning and in the social, spiritual and aesthetic life of the school.

Effective leaders or principals promote success for all students by (1) facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community; (2) advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conductive to student learning and staff professional growth; (3) ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for safe, efficient, and effective learning environment; (4) collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources; (5) acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and (6) understanding, responding to and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. They focus their energy on creating a professional learning community i which can help students succeed. They know how to cultivate, nourish, and grow new leaders and paint a vision in which the school becomes a coherent community of leaders and learners.

In short effective leadership values create an overall impact on schools by offering them mainly the following six benefits:

  i.   Strategic direction and policy environment

  ii. Teaching, learning and curriculum

  iii. Leader and teacher growth and development

  iv. Staff and resource management

  v.   Quality assurance and accountability

  vi. External communication and connection

CONCLUSION

This research makes clear the importance of leadership for creating good schools. Ultimately, the relationship that shapes the culture and climate of the school are strongly influenced by the school leadership. In schools where achievement was high and where was a clear sense of

community, it could be found invariably that the principal makes the difference. The most significant change in school culture happens when school leaders, teachers, and students model the values and beliefs important to the institution. The action of the school leaders are noticed and interpreted by others as "what is important". A school leader who acts with care and concern for others will develop a school culture with similar values. On the other hand, the leader who ignores the value and input of others places a stamp of approval on selfish behaviors and attitudes. It can be understood that the leadership values are high at State Board Schools of Maharashtra, India and these create a great impact on the children studying in the same.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improvement of leadership in schools is one of the most promising points of intervention to raise the quality and efficiency of secondary education across India. The following recommendations are to be considered by the management in order to improve the leadership values in schools in India:

- The school management must systematize the recruitment of teachers to become principals based on explicit professional criteria

- It should professionalize the position of secondary school principal and develop certification courses in school leadership

- It must establish regional or national institutions that specialize in advanced degrees or certification for educational leadership and organize ongoing professional development

- The management must develop a program of ongoing in-service professional development for secondary principals that includes an initial induction program and ongoing support

- In addition to that, it has to ensure that the idea of the principals as instructional leaders as well as transparent and efficient administrator is well understood by teachers and communities and incorporated in all initial preparation an ongoing professional development for principals. Likewise, ensure that the principal's role in creating strong linkages with communities is understood and the principals are prepared for this role.

- Finally it must organize principal's clusters that meet regularly, providing a setting for delivery of some of the formal ongoing professional development and creating an opportunity for

informal communal problem-solving, experience-sharing, and strategizing about effective approaches to secondary school leadership.

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