Construction of Educational Leadership among School Teachers: Traces of Social Identity

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Present study highlighted the traces of social identity based on school belongingness in the response obtained from secondary school teachers. Exploration was conducted in two phases, phase 1(N=100) and Phase 2 (N=141), where teachers were asked about the quality of ideally effective leader they would prefer. The obtained samples of qualities were thematically transformed into broader variable which were then factor analyzed. Under social identity traditions, leadership is not based on individual characteristics' but it is a group process. Based on this theoretical assumption, the present study examined the psychometric dimensions of leadership constructed among school teachers and questioned whether social identity matters in the perception of leaders? Result obtained seven dimensions (69.078% of total variance) in which four dimensions viz., achievement orientation, conventional personality orientation, nurturant and health orientation (together constituting 31.133% of total variance) showing the importance of individual characteristics' of leaders. However, other three dimensions viz., ingroup prototypicality, entrepreneur of identity, and group productivity together constituting 37.935% of total variance showed traces of social identity as potent reason behind the preferences of ideally effective leader.

Keywords: Leadership, Schools, Social Identity, Social construction of leadership

There are often reports about educational leaders undergoing various training programs for imparting effective educational leadership. Though call for educational leadership in the school context from various perspectives had been widely respected (Blase & Blase, 1997; Block, 1993; Bryant, 1998; Fullan, 1996; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, 1992; Owen, 1992; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Schmuck, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1992), an attempt to construct a general theory of educational leadership (Leithwood, Chapman, Corson, Hallinger, & Hart, 1996) was found difficult at practice level (Heck & Hallinger, 2005). Metatheoretically, work on educational leadership in school context had been presented in the individual mode of analysis (Blasé & Blasé, 1997) or at a more social-cultural level (Dimmock & Walker, 2000; 2005) where the individual mode of analysis becomes more powerful at a practice level (Heck & Hallinger,

2005). Therefore, it may be inferred that the perspectives from which educational leadership was seen most of the time demands more social and cultural insights.

History of Educational Leadership

Educational leadership seems to have, as many definitions as there are people willing to define it (Willams, 2000). It was around the beginning of the twentieth century that duties of school heads increased manifold and covered not only discipline and care of the students, distribution of the equipment, recording and reporting, but also organization and general management and supervision of buildings and grounds (Pierce, 1935). In the former days, the authoritarian educational leader was looked upto with awe and fear by both staff and students alike. Referring to that era, Benben (1962) states that, "those educational leaders did not have

many administrative problems, for the number of students was small and their own duties were largely of a clerical nature such as, keeping records of attendance and marks, to see that the rooms were clean, classroom supplies were distributed and the bell was rung on time" (p. 275). Landmark studies of educational leadership in the school context show the dominant paradigm (Kuhn, 1962) of individualistic tradition (Halpin & Winer, 1957; Lipham & Hoeh, 1974; Neagley & Evans, 1964) and more recently (Delapp, 1988; Virmani, 1984; Williams, 2000). Later studies did not fit with the authoritarian nature of educational leadership in organization other than the school context but highlighted nurturing, caring and prosocial environments (transformational) created by the educational leader as the major precursor for effective educational leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; also see Singh & Bhandarkar, 1990; Sinha, 1980). Thus, predominant notions of the educational leader's role have evolved from manager to street-level bureaucrat, to instructional educational leader, and to transformational educational leader (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998). A more recent perspective to see the phenomenon of educational leadership in school context has been placed in the following section.

Traditionally, educational leadership followed the pattern distributed generally to other contexts and organizations. Leadership has been a principle not only about which competing personality theories have made much ado but about which the relevance of personality was rarely questioned (see Heine, 1971). It was found that educational leadership followed the same patterns as was followed in other organizational settings. Leadership was always identified with personal qualities and the power of personality vis-a-vis the group (Heine, 1971). Hogan & Kaiser (2005) revisited the construct leadership and questioned its universality and generalizability in terms of traits and dimensions. It was highlighted that role of

teams and groups is also important if the imposition of leadership seems to be metatheoretically driven. However, most of the theories or models of general leadership from the discipline of mainstream individualistic psychology had been applied to the school context (Horner, 2003). Educational leadership in the school context appears as not a wholesome body of dimensions operating universally with set personal traits but one with cultural implications as well (Dimmock & Walker, 2005).

Educational Leadership as Social Construct

Culture and contextual factors affecting the process of educational leadership in school is been looked into critically (Foster, 1989; Watkins, 1989). As happened in the mainstream leadership literature, the notions of effective leadership were judged from the behavior of leaders until the followers' perspective was taken into account as was done in other contexts apart from school (e.g., Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985; Shamir, 2007). A social constructionist theory to describe the relationship between leadership and followership argued that leadership is significantly affected by the way followers construct their understanding of the leaders in terms of their interpretation of his or her personality, behaviours and effectiveness (e.g., Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985; as cited in Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009). Recent researches in the social construction of leadership or on how followers romanticize their leaders have resulted in modest findings (Bligh, Kohles, Pearce, Justin, & Stovall, 2007; Kulich, Ryan, & Haslam, 2007; Schyns, Felfe, 2007; Weber, Camerer, Blank, Rottenstreich, & Knez, 2001). But the concept itself has given ample opportunity to explore many aspects of followership, for example, followers' traits and their self concept clarity in leader-follower relationships (e.g., Dvir & Shamir, 2003; Howell & Shamir, 2005). In this regard, divergent social construction of followership (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, Patera, West, & McGregor, 2007; Kelley, 1992) has been extensively explored including the recommendations to see followers' needs, identities and implicit theories affecting leaders' selection (see Shamir, 2007). Shamir (2007) suggested that leadership effectiveness is just as much a product of good followers as it is of good educational leaders (as cited in Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009).

Educational Leadership as Socially Driven Process

Interaction of the individual with the group and vice-versa is a matter of group's definition of the individual's meaning system. Characteristics of individuals have importance but are not paramount in any situation (Hencly, 1973). Every aspect of individual's life may get derived by the social forces around him or her. The way social and psychological literature dealt with individual interaction with society seems to be delineating from the core issue of social interaction in the social context of the school.

Earlier noticed dimensions of leadership such as influence (Yukl, 2002), shared value system (House, et al., 1999) and vision (Bennis & Nanus, 1985) never documented the role of groups and subgroups. However, later work in the domain of intergroup relation highlighted the role of ingroup identification in the selection of leader (Hogg, 2001) in organizations other than educational context.

Placing Educational Leadership as Product of Social Identity

The work by social identity theorists (e.g., Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) made major impact on the social psychology literatures. The four core concept of social identity theory developed out of the minimal group experiments were namely social categorization, social identity, social comparison and psychological group distinctiveness (as cited in Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). Social categorization is

the segmentation of the world so as to impose an order on the environment and provide a locus of identification for the self. Social identity is that part of the individuals' self concept which derives from knowledge of his or her membership in a social group, together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. Social comparison is the process through which characteristics of the ingroup are compared to those of the outgroup. Psychological group distinctiveness is assumed to be the state desired by individuals in whom the ingroup has an identity that is perceived by the group members as being both distinct and positive vis-à-vis relevant comparison groups (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). From the conceptual understanding of social identity, it may be inferred that process of leadership is a group phenomenon (Chemers, 2001; Haslam, 2001; Hogg, 2001; Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005). In other words, it is not an isolated entity and works within the larger social. political and cultural-historical processes. The issue of educational leadership has taken various turns from one consensus to other. Investigators have shifted from the authoritarian-educational leader perspective and begun to specifically focus on the characteristics of educational leaders as manifestation of the broader social milieu. Hence, characteristics and traits were eventually translated or more appropriately transcended into the complexity of situations and identities. Thus, it became mandatory and legitimate in many disciplines and subdisciplines dealing with education to see whether educational leaders share common attributes sanctioned by the societies and whether those same societies and organizations screen their educational leadership cohorts in any way to guarantee conformity to these preferred cultural types or models (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996).

Under the social identity paradigm, Haslam (2001) considers leadership to be a process of mutual influence that revolves around a partnership in a social selfcategorical relationship. Leadership activity and leadership effectiveness largely revolves around the leader's ability to create identity definitions and to engage people in the process of turning those definitions into practical realities (Reicher, et al., 2005). Leaders (and followers) are not mere ciphers, but rather entrepreneurs of identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001, 2003). This dynamic view of the leadership process is underpinned by a dynamic model of the relationship between social reality, social identity and collective action (Reicher, et al., 2005). Realization of social identity based values and norms among the group are the major hallmark of an leader in his use of skills to initiate structure in any organizational or social context (Fleishman, 1953; Fleishman & Peters, 1962; Reicher, et al., 2005). This relates to at one hand, structure of group and at other hand to the structure of wider society; thereby turning social identity into social reality (Reicher, et al., 2005).

The present study looks into what notions of educational leadership are constructed among teachers. An attempt has been made to resurface how social identity of leader is important in the social construction of ideally effective leader. The following questions arise from review of literature, and they are the focus of this study: "What elements of current leadership models appear most salient in the perception of secondary school teachers in Varanasi?"

In this context, present study explores the following major objective is to explore the construction of leadership in school system of Varanasi, India.

Method

Participant:

The study aimed to explore the construction of leadership in the urban school system of Varanasi. This study was completed in two phases. Teachers were selected

together from private and government schools. All teachers were graduate, trained and having teaching experience of more than 5 years. For the first phase of study, the number of teachers selected was 100 from different schools on the basis of availability. For the second phase of the study, the total number of teachers selected was 150 where a total of 141 (75 government school teachers and 66 private school teachers) responses were obtained.

Procedure:

Phase 1 is description based where teachers were asked two open ended questions viz, 1) Please list down below the behavior you can think of which are characteristics of an ideally effective leader and, 2) During your working life in different schools and also as a student who did you think is most effective as leader and why? What do you think made him/her an effective leader? Participants were given sufficient time to generate the response. Phase one took around one and half month. Five most frequent responses from teachers were included in the second phase study.

Results

Table 1 shows seven factors obtained school system viz., ingroup prototypicality, group productivity, achievement orientation, conventional personality orientation, Nurturant, charismatic and health orientation by suppressing factor loadings less than 0.45 and communalities less than 0.5. With the help of Principle Component method, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is found to be 0.86 at sixth VARIMAX rotation with Kaiser Normalization. Inter-factor correlation is obtained with the help of principle component method applying PROMAX rotation with Kaiser Normalization. Table 3 shows the extracts of descriptions obtained from teachers and the associated frequent variables.

First factor is composed of five items: helpful, cooperative, good behavior, responsibility, impartial. Inter-item correlation among items shows significant relationship at (p<.01, 2-tailed). This factor is labeled as Ingroup Prototypicality (alpha=0.82) (Burton, 1993; Haslam, Turner & Oakes, 1999; Lord & Maher, 1991; Turner & Haslam, 2000). Second factor is composed of six items: vigilant, confident, commitment, decision taking ability, solution oriented and hardworking. Inter-item correlation among items shows significant relationship at (p<.01, 2-tailed). This factor is labeled as Group Productivity (alpha=0.81) (Cartwright & Zander, 1960; Haslam, McGarty et al, 1998; Worchel, 1994). Third factor is composed of two items: highly educated and effective in many domains. Inter-item correlation between the items shows significant relationship at

(p<.01, 2-tailed). This factor is labeled as Achievement Orientation (alpha=0.65) (Kouzes & Posner, 1993; Yukl, 1998; French & Raven, 1959; Katz & Kahn, 1966). Fourth factor is composed of two items: punctual and disciplined. Inter-item correlation between the items shows significant relationship at (p<.01, 2-tailed). This factor is labeled as Conventional Personality Orientation (alpha=0.63) (see Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Fifth factor is composed of two items: empathy and humane touch. Inter-item correlation between the items shows significant relationship at (p<.01, 2-tailed). This factor is labeled as Nurturant (alpha=0.58) (Sinha, 1980). Sixth factor is composed of two items: Role model and good orator. Inter-item correlation between the items shows significant relationship at (p<.01,

Table 1. Factor structure obtained from school system, its eigen value,% variance and commonalities (h²).

Variables	М	SD	FT1	FT2	FT3	FT4	FT5	FT6 FT7	h²
Helpful	3.9	.95	.78						.77
Cooperative	4.1	.80	.76						.68
Good Behaviour	3.9	1.02	.70						.63
Responsible	4.3	.89	.66						.70
Impartial	3.9	1.05	.58						.55
Vigilant	4.1	.94		.73					.66
Confident	4.3	.81		.73					.68
Committed	4.3	.9		.73					.70
Decision taking ability	4.4	.82		.59					.65
Solution oriented	4.0	.89		.55					.60
Hardworking	4.2	.96		.52					.70
Highly educated	3.7	1.04			.77				.68
Knowledgeable	3.5	1.04			.76				.68
Punctual	4.3	.69				.87			.80
Disciplined	4.5	.79				.8			.75
Empathy	3.9	1.01					.77		.74
Human touch	4.0	.89					.56		.67
Role model	4.3	.96						.75	.72
Orator	3.9	1.01						.62	.74
Healthy	3.7	1.09						.76	.71
EIGEN VALUE	3.262	2.991	2.0	23	1.553	1.407	1.336	1.243	
%VARIANCE 16.311	14.955	10.117		'65	7.037	6.680	6.214		
CUMMULATIVE%	16.311	31.26	5 41.	.382	49.147	56.185	62.864	69.078	

FT1-Ingroup Prototypicality; FT2-Group Productivity; FT3-Achievement Orientation; FT4-Conventional Personality Orientation; FT5-Nurturant; FT6-Entrepreneur of Identity; FT7- Health Orientation. Inter - dimensional correlation of school (Table 2) shows significant correlation between factor 1 and factor 2, factor 1 and factor 3, factor 2 and factor 3, factor 1 and factor 6, factor 2 and factor 3 and factor 6. PROMAX rotation identifies the correlation among the factors which shows the possibility of some variables working latently.

2-tailed). This factor is labeled as Entrepreneur of Identity (alpha=0.36) (Reicher & Hopkins, 1996). Seventh factor is composed of single surrogate variable 'healthy' with factor loading 0.76. This factor is labeled as Health Orientation (alpha=0.76) (Bass, 1990; Marmot, 2004; Campbell, Simpson, Stewart, & Manning, 2003).

Table 2. Inter-factor correlation of total school

FT1	FT2	FT3	FT4	FT5	FT6	FT7
FT2	.55**					
FT3	.4**	.45**				
FT4	.16	.18	07			
FT5	.11	.08	.17	04		
FT6	.3*	.33*	.41**	01	.16	
FT7	.05	.01	.07	14	05	04

^{**}p<.01(2-tailed) *p<.05(2-tailed)

Table 3. The extracts of descriptions obtained from teachers and the associated frequent variables

S.N	o.Extracts of description obtained	Frequently used words			
1. "wah chaubis ghante nagriko ki sewa karne ke liye tayar rehta ho"					
	[He is ready to help for twenty four hours]	Helpful			
	"sub shikshako ke saath ghul-mil kar samnjasya sthapit karne k				
	shramta ho" [ability to come at consensus through cooperation]				
	"sabke prati udaar chitt hridyawala ho" [having good behavior	·			
	with everyone]	Good Behaviour			
	ʻzimmedaari ka ahsaas ho"	Responsibility			
	"sabke prati saman vyhavaar karne ki shramta"	,			
	[impartial to everyone]	Impartial			
	"sabhi karyo ki nigraani karni chaiye"[he should be vigilant and	P			
	alert towards the duty]	Vigilant			
	"atmavishvass hona chaiye" [Should be confident]	Confident			
	"purna samarpan"[full commitment]	Commitment			
	adbhut nirnayen shakti"[Ability to take decision]	Decision taking ability			
	"smasyao ke nirakaran ki shramta" [ability to find	3 ,			
	solution to the problems]	Solution Oriented			
	"Kadi mehnat karne wala" [should be hardworking]	Hardworking			
	"unki shakshanik yogyata ucch koti ki honi chaiye"[should be	3			
	highly educated]	Highly Educated			
	"Kai vishayo ka gyan hona chaiye"[He should have knowledge	3 ,			
	of many subjects]	Knowledgeable			
	"kartavya evam samay ke prati satat jagrukta"	3			
	[He should be punctual]	Punctual			
	" anusashit hona chaiye"[Should be disciplined]	Disciplined			
	"wah sabke sukh ko apna sukh evam sabke dukh ko apna	·			
	dukh samajne waala ho"[should be emphatic towards other]	Empathy			
	uske andur sabke prati kalyaan ki bhavna evam bhalai ki	. ,			
	bhavna ho"[should have humane touch]	Humane Touch			
	'Prabhavshali vyaktitva ka swami hona chaiye taki dusre uska				
	anusaran kar sake"[Should be role model for other]	Role model			
	"bolne ki shaili evam bhasha bahut hi saral honi chaiye jo ek				
	sadharan vyakti bhi samajh sake"[He should be good orator				
	so that anuone could understand]	Good Orator			
	"ek swashta shareer aur swastha mansikta ka hona chaiye"				
	[he should be of good physical and mental health]	Healthy			
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Discussion

The principle goal of present study was to explore the notion of leadership constructed among school teachers. Factor analysis of the data obtained from secondary school teachers resulted in 69.078% of total variance constituting seven factors. Four factors, viz., achievement orientation, conventional personality orientation, nurturant and health orientation (together constituting 31.133% of total variance) showed the importance of individual characteristics' of leaders. Other three factors viz., ingroup prototypicality, entrepreneur of identity, and group productivity together constituting 37.935% of total variance showing traces of social identity as potent reason behind the preferences of ideally effective educational leader. Thematically, 'Ingroup Prototypicality', 'Entrepreneur of Identity' and Group Productivity can be indexed under broader domain "Prototypical Leadership" (Lord & Maher, 1991; Haslam, Turner & Oaks, 1999; Turner & Haslam, 2000).

Examining schools closely it is found that teacher's perception of ideal leader does not lie in the domain of traditional administrative skills but in bringing change and reforms in school system through mobilizing people for collective struggle by instigating their social identity. Theoretically, leaders were perceived from two perspectives broadly, namely, employee orientation and work orientation where much wider context was seen as out of the psychological analysis in Indian settings. Factors like ingroup prototypicality, productivity, group achievement orientation, conventional orientation, personality nurturant, entrepreneur of identity and health orientation accounted both for personal characteristics and social identity where social identity characteristics shows greater variance.

Many identities are playing their role according to the given context showing its hybridity such as caste system, male domination, patriarchy etc and are important issues to be addressed at the social psychological depth for assertive social change and reforms. This shows that leadership doesn't locate itself in one person but the group and it is the group which matters in the construction of leadership. Therefore, future researches have reason to see the value preferences of people which got constructed through the history, which in the given social context get internalized and see their leaders as ingroup member, and not other.

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