

Tracing the Leadership Styles for Educational Success in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Basic education may have been sufficient for many occupations in the economy at the early phases of growth. However, globalization and technological development will necessitate paradigm for human-centered development suggesting that knowledge and skill will be essential for individuals' competitiveness and for the nation. The key question is how well the educational system can provide the workforce with these talents, which will be in high demand or highly valued in the long run. There are still many issues with education quality and the system overall. Despite gains in terms of equity and access, mostly at the primary level, Bangladesh still faces several difficulties in comparison to its South Asian neighbors and other countries. Organizations have understood how critical it is in this post-industrial era to have a workforce with strong leadership capabilities or styles if they want to keep their competitive edge in the marketplace. The number of leadership education programs offered in educational institutions throughout the world has increased as a result of this, which has broadened the area of leadership styles to include many different fields of study. This essay will examine how strong educational leadership may direct the curriculum toward a goal by using values. Based on the examination of leadership styles, I draw conclusions about their benefits and drawbacks as well as how they might help Bangladeshi management address its challenges.

KeyWord: *Educational leadership, curriculum, vision and values, leadership styles.*

Introduction

The term 'leadership' has now-a-days been an attractive concept to all of us. This concept is dynamic and creative, and the responsibility for success or failure of any organizations is largely in the hands of leadership performance. There is a widespread belief in many parts of the world that educational institutions require effective educational leaders. The meaningful operation of any educational institution primarily depends on the guidance of good educational leadership. Effective educational leadership is also key to successful curriculum design and its implementation. In the context of curriculum, educational leaders need to establish vision at first as the vision inspires and helps educational institutions to reach a higher standard. Again, values or aims underpin this vision and these values are determined by reflecting on the identity of a country. That's why effective educational leadership is needed to help guide the curriculum through values towards vision. Otherwise, neither vision nor values can perfectly be achieved. However, there are some leadership barriers to achieving curriculum vision in Bangladesh. So this writing will explain briefly curriculum, challenges, vision and values, and the importance of leadership in the context of Bangladesh. This writing will also discuss transformational leadership, its strengths and weakness, and the leadership styles that can bridge the gap between management and challenges in Bangladesh.

Importance of Educational Leadership

Historically the early years of the twenty-first century, there is a growing understanding of the importance of educational leadership. This is for the wide spreading demand from some developed and developing countries over the world. It is increasingly recognized that the leadership quality makes a significant difference in learners' outcomes and school improvement (Bush 2009, O'Brien 2016). Many governments think that their people are the main assets and that the development of skilled manpower leads to national prosperity. This requires not only trained teachers but highly effective leadership as well. If the schools are to provide the best possible student attainment, effective leaders and managers are necessary (Bush 2009). Various international records and policy documents demonstrate the link between effective leadership and school improvement (O'

Brien 2016). Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins (2008) make 'Seven strong claims about successful school leadership' in their article. These include the following:

- School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning-Effective leadership activities are considered as a mechanism which is closely related to good outcomes. Based on this qualitative case study document, an exceptional school setting can be claimed to contribute more significantly to student learning achievement.
- Almost all successful leaders attend to the same repertoire of basic leadership practices- The main task for successful leadership is to help improving employee competency including values, beliefs, knowledge and skills, motivations and the working environment.
- School leaders improve teaching and learning most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions-Significant emphasis has recently been focused on school leaders' contribution particularly improving staff capacity.

Curriculum, Vision, Values, and Leadership

Generally, curriculum means a guideline of education with a view to successful learning for all the children and young people, making them responsible citizens. According to Wiles & Bondi (2007, p.2) 'The curriculum represents a set of desired goals or values that activated through a development process and culminate in successful learning experiences for students.' Kelly (2009) says curriculum as, 'All the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside of school.' Braslavsky (2003) defines, 'Curriculum is an agreement among communities, educational professionals, and the State on what learners should take on during specific periods of their lives.'

In the context of curriculum, the quality of leadership is vital to produce the best possible outcomes for their learners. Cuban (1998, cited Bush, 2008, p.12) states, 'By leadership, I mean influencing others' actions in achieving desirable ends'. So, leadership is an activity to lead some people or an organisation with a clear vision and capability to do creatively in difficult situations and the importance of leadership behaviours is most likely to promote successful organisations.

Leaders must have a vision for their organisation and vision is considered as an important part of effective leadership. In this regard, organisation or group members need to share the vision with the leader. Northouse (2015) says, in developing a vision, a leader is able to visualize positive outcomes in the future and communicate these to others. Some time it is not possible to a leader to figure out the exact picture for the future. Research on visionary leadership suggests that visions have five characteristics: a change, values, a map, and a challenge (Nanus, 1992; Zaccaro and Banks, 2001). Bangladesh Ministry of Education (2010) outlines its vision as ensuring quality education for all. The main purpose is to effect qualitative change in the education system and develop skilled human resources with a view to build up a developed and prosperous Bangladesh. So, educational leaders need vision as Bush (2008, p.3) notes, 'a clear vision has the potential to develop schools.'

Cassidy (2008) considers the values underpinning the curriculum. Again, a leader also needs to highlight the values of the vision by emphasizing how the vision presents ideals worth pursuing (Northouse, 2015). In Scottish Curriculum for Excellence(cfe) outlines values as promoting high aspiration, the rights and responsibilities, tolerance, care and respect, considered judgment and ethical action, and developing 4 capacities, such as, successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors(The Scottish Executive, 2004, p. 11-12) .Bangladesh Ministry of Education (2010) explains values as morality, honesty, patriotism, accountability and social responsibility for acquiring quality modern education and knowledge of contemporary science and technology. These values will help to make the future generation into a true patriotic manner and able them to provide leadership in their respective fields.

Leadership Challenges in Bangladesh

A number of leadership barriers in Bangladesh in achieving curriculum vision or values. First of all, Bureaucratic problem is one of the key barriers in developing leadership activities in Bangladesh, although bureaucracy is very essential for a country's smooth functioning and betterment. Pattern of the bureaucracy closely linked to the ministry and every ministry or division has a number of directorates, departments, and attached offices, that effort together by means of the field offices for that –ministry or division. But teachers, head teachers, school managing committee and parents are excluded from this hierarchical management process (Mullick et al,2012a).Therefore, it is not so easy for a leader to executing programs, plans or co-ordination among these concern bodies.

Secondly, Bangladesh is a democratic country and after a certain period of time the government may be changed. It's extremely unfortunate that with the changing government another new policies and plans are trying to introduce by the new government without judging previous ones only to just achieve popularity in favor of them.

Thirdly, although Bangladesh has achieved noticeable progress in primary education in terms of students' enrolment, but the lack of skilled teachers are also creating barrier to promote leadership in the field of education. Implementing a vision leaders need to depend on teachers as they are the main actor at field level. So without skilled teachers leaders are not capable to fulfill their dreams. Again, teacher-student ratio is far more behind the international standard. The minimum international standard for teacher-student ratio is 30:1, whereas in Bangladesh one teacher for every 53 students at primary level (Directorate o Primary Education (DPE).

Fourthly, Bangladesh is a developing country and still some people are living here under poverty level .This is another type of barrier establishing a vision by the leader. According to Bangladesh's Constitution (Article 17), all the children are supposed to receive full free education up to SSC (secondary school certificate) level. In fact, the children from poorer families at rural areas do not get sufficient opportunities at the same level of schooling.

Finally, the budgetary allocation for education sector in Bangladesh is not adequate in comparison with other developing countries over the world. Bangladesh spends less than 3% of its GDP in the education sector (PEDP-3).

Transformational Leadership

The concept of transformational leadership as an important approach was initially introduced by James Macgregor Burns. Burns (1978) defined transformational leadership as when "leaders and followers make each other to advance to a higher level of moral and motivation." Transformational leaders have the capability to organize and to motivate followers achieving common goals through the strength of their vision and values. Afterwards, prominent researcher Bernard M. Bass develops the previous ideas. According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership can be defined based on the impact that it has on followers. In fact, transformational leadership is one kind of strategy of charismatic leadership to inspire positive changes among the followers, and the popularity of transformational leadership largely depends on intrinsic motivation and follower development that fits the today's work groups need, (Bass and Rigo, 2006).

Four influencing elements are closely connected with internal values and ideals of transformational leadership such as charisma or idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). Firstly, charisma or idealized influence explains the quality of transformational leaders who are morally and ethically strong enough to do the right thing and act as strong role model with a vision and a sense of mission for their followers (ibid, 1985). So these leaders are cordially honored and trusted by their followers. Secondly, inspirational motivation is a component to describe the leaders who have high expectations from their followers as they are committed to inspire them through effective motivation (ibid, 1985). Thirdly, intellectual stimulation outlines leadership that stimulate or support followers to be creative and develop innovative ways so that followers may able to reflect upon beliefs and values that helps them to turn into action (ibid, 1985). Finally, the element of individualized consideration of transformational leadership provides a congenial atmosphere to the personal needs of followers and these leaders act as coaches or advisors to develop growth through individual challenges (ibid, 1985).

Transformational leadership has various strengths. Firstly, in the meantime, there has so many research working been done in various perspectives in the field of transformational leadership. Lowe & Gardner (2001) figured out that from 1990 to 2000 about 34% of articles published in Leadership Quarterly were about transformational or charismatic leadership. Secondly, the concept of transformational leadership is more relevant to the common people with the most accepted notion of leadership meaning. So the people feel more attraction to transformational leadership as it makes clear sense to them. Thirdly, transformational leadership is actually the process of mutual understanding of both the followers' and the leader's needs. According to Bryman (1992, p.176) followers attain such a strong position in the evolution of transformational process. Fourthly, transformational approach supports broader picture of leadership that includes not only the exchange of rewards like transactional process, but also the needs and growth of followers (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1985). Fourthly, transformational leadership involves attempts by leaders moving on people towards moral responsibility at higher level of standers (Burns, 1978). Finally, there is significant evidence shows that transformational leadership is an effective style of leadership (Yukl, 1999).

However, transformational leadership has some weakness too. First criticism is that it is hard to clarify the exact parameters of transformational leadership and these parameters often overlap with similar meanings as it covers so many activities and characteristics such as creating vision, motivation, building trust, etc. Tracey and Hinkin (1998) have shown significant overlap between each of the four I's. Second criticism involves measuring about transformational leadership because of its four elements are correlate highly with one another and difficult to identify as distinct categories (Tejeda, Scandura, & Pillai, 2001). A third criticism is that transformational leadership considers leadership as a personality trait instead of considering a behavior that people can learn. A fourth criticism is that there is no causal connection between transformational leadership and changes in followers, although it is widely acknowledged that transformational leaders have the capability to bring positive changes with a view to organizational effectiveness. A fifth criticism is that transformational leadership is undemocratic as transformational leaders usually plays a direct role in facing challenges , developing a vision and supporting new directions (Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1993). Final criticism is that transformational leaders are worried about people's changing attitudes towards vision and values. It is also difficult to find out whether the new directions are appropriate or more positive and not so easy to evaluate that a new vision is better or not.

Transformational Leadership in Bangladesh

In the context of Bangladesh, the government is trying to promote quality education for all. The National Education Policy 2010 is the most recent policy in Bangladesh where some strong initiatives along with some strategies reforming existing education system have been described elaborately. These attempts can be considered as role playing activities like transformational leadership. For example, the journey towards inclusive education in Bangladesh is more than a matter of bringing all children into mainstream rather it is a process of quality education for all. Inclusion involves the process of changing values, attitudes, policies and practices within the school setting and beyond (Ahsan & Mullick, 2013, p.152). Over the past few years, the government has recognised inclusive education as a tool to reach the goals of Education for All (EFL) and for this reason the government has already developed various policies that can help to improve inclusive education in Bangladesh.

Another important attempt is SLIP (School-Level Improvement Plan) which helps to support the community involving in school activities and to empower members of the community to make policy decisions at the school level (Ahsan & Mullick, 2013, p. 156). We consider that through SLIP, parents, teachers, members of school management committees (SMCs) and other stakeholders would work together to enhance the quality of learning for all children (DPE 2009a). SLIP worked as a voice from the roots to prevent the exclusion of students disadvantaged by gender, special needs, ethnicity, and socio-economic background (Ahsan & Mullick, 2013, p. 156). So the activities of SLIP emphasized on strengthening head teachers and teachers, increasing their professional motivation, and empowering school communities to develop their sense of ownership of the school (ibid, p.156).

PES (Primary Education Stipend), most significant project, was initially launched by the government in 2002. PES aims is to support by providing them with cash assistance in more than 5 million disadvantaged primary school students living in rural areas of Bangladesh (Ahsan & Mullick, 2013, p. 157). Its five main objectives are: (i) increase the enrolment rate of all school-aged children from poor families; (ii) increase their attendance rate; (iii) reduce their dropout rate; (iv) establish equity in financial assistance to all children of primary school age; and (v) enhance the quality of primary education (MoPME 2010).

Furthermore, ROSC (Reaching Out-of-School Children) is also an important project that is locally known as the Ananda School (School of Joy).The chief aim of ROSC is to reduce the number of out-of-school children through improved access to quality education. The project is designed to complement the PEDP II by identifying children who are not yet in school (UCIL 2011). It aimed to take the initiative in areas that are relatively substandard, considering the net enrolment rate, primary cycle completion rate, level of poverty, and gender parity. A ROSC school enrolled only those children who had never been enrolled in any school or had dropped out of school more than a year earlier (DPE 2009b). The ROSC project has several key achievements: (a) It mobilizes stakeholders, raises awareness about primary education, and motivates out-of-school children to enter school. (b) It provides education allowances to the enrolled children to support them in continuing and completing their schooling. It also provides grants to the schools to improve the overall quality of education. (c) It established a sound structure to manage and implement the project and develop the capacity of service providers by forming a network coordinating body (PAL 2011).

A numbers of barriers are needed to consider for effective transformational leadership in the context of Bangladesh. The first biggest barrier to transformational leadership is about the attitude towards centralisation of power. School leaders including community members have very limited power to bring any changes within school settings. According to Ainscow and Sandill (2010), in order to ensure involvement of community members in decision making process, decentralisation and empowerment of school level leadership can be considered as an effective strategy. A second barrier to transformational leadership is lack of skilled teachers in educational institutions. This scenario is more acute in primary school level. Approximately 73 percent teachers of government primary schools and 70 percent teachers of registered non-government primary schools do not have subject-based training. In addition, they have to teach more than one subject, although they do not have sufficient skill and training (TIB report 2008). A third important barrier to transformational leadership is paying low salary and benefits to the teachers. So the teachers are often engage in other private job and this hamper student's progress. The salary range of the teachers of government primary schools is Tk 4,900-5,780, registered schools is Tk 2,950, and community schools is Tk 1,200 only (ibid, 2008). A fourth barrier to transformational leadership is corruption and irregularities in recruiting teachers. Although the Government has achieved significant progress in various steps, illegal transaction of money for selecting candidates and suitable posting places still exists in Bangladesh (ibid, 2008). Considering the discussion above, it becomes apparent that these barriers create obstacle to transformational leaders of Bangladesh in achieving their goals.

Now it is required to define the term leadership styles; to explain key theories related to leadership styles; to consider why an understanding of leadership styles is important for leaders; and to explore the relationship between leadership styles and power. Lastly, it will consider the enactment of these ideas in the context of Bangladesh within an education setting.

Leadership style

It is important to consider one's personal philosophy of leadership. The philosophy of effective leadership basically depends on an assumption about how subordinates response to the leader and their work. According to the nature of people and work, leadership style draws upon the leader's unique set of attitudes and beliefs. Leadership style can be defined as leaders' behaviors and these behaviors indicate leaders' activities in indifferent contexts towards followers. So leadership style is derived from leaders' personal philosophy (Northouse, 2015) and is 'understood as relatively stable patterns of behavior that are manifested by leaders' (Eagly et al 2001, p.781). In addition, the manager needs to inspire high morality, strong cooperation, and eagerness to work to achieve good outcomes from the followers (Mullins, 2013).

In fact, leadership style can be described in so many ways or dimensions including abdicatorial, bureaucratic, charismatic, dictatorial, participative etc. Considering all three types of leadership style can be categorized in terms of power, for example, the authoritarian, the democratic and a laissez-faire or abdication (Mullins, 2013 and Northouse, 2015). Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1957, cited in Dawson, 2000) refers to the continuum of leadership behavior that focuses on seven styles: tells sells, suggests, consults, joins, delegates, and abdicates. According to Mullins (2013), neither is extreme; there are a few limitations as well. It can be identified as four main styles.

- Tells- leader makes a decision without any participation and announces this to followers for its implementation.
- Sells- leader makes a decision recognizing some questions they are faced with, gives persuasive reasons to subordinates to follow.
- Consults-a leader does not take a decision without advice and suggestion from subordinates.
- Joins- leader makes a possible decision subject to altering by subordinates' inputs.

Mullin (2013, p.378) says, 'there is no single style of leadership appropriate to all situations'. The situational or contingency theory is one of the important forces that influence leadership style. Firstly, Fielder (1967) developed a situational model measuring 'least preferred co-worker' (LPC) scale. Fielder refers to three factors depends on the situation that affects a leader's role. Leader-member relations- how much the leader is trusted and liked by group members; the task structure-how clearly defined the task and how well the procedures for the group; position power- how much the leader exercise power in terms of rewards or punishments, promotion or demotion. So Fielder's suggestion is leadership style will vary as the leadership situation varies.

Understanding leadership style is important as it helps a leader to lead effectively in different situations. Generally, motivation is the main tool for success and it is an important factor to identify whether an

organization is effective or ineffective (Smith, A, and Langston, A, 1999). Mullins (1996) refers to a three-fold classification based on expectations and needs. These are:

- An extrinsic motivation that concerned with 'other things' or economic rewards, for example, pay, incentives, security, pension rights.
- An intrinsic motivation that concerned with 'oneself' and derived from working nature- such as positive recognition, sense of achievement, feeling appreciated.
- Social relationships that concerned with 'other people', for example, friendships, a group work, social status.

In the context of Bangladesh, motivation is perfect as this style is to give students what they actually want. In that case, Mullins (2013) Management by objectives (MBO) styles is also needed to be considered as MBO is one of the significant approaches or styles that try to link organizational targets with individual performance and development by involving in all management levels including planning, direction, and execution of work. It is an attractive process that involves a continuous cycle of interrelated activities. These include a clear understanding of organizational objectives and targets, timely feedback or reviewing organizational performance and active participation with subordinates.

Again, power is closely connected to the leadership style and selecting power strategy varies to the leader's views and the target. Raven (2008) says that humans utilize various strategies of power whenever the need to interact with one another. He represents six bases of power.

- Informational- leader explains why readjustment or effective change is necessary to attain desirable a goal. He gives persuasive reasons to the followers. This power strategy leads to socially independent change.
- Reward- leader offers positive incentive subject to fulfill the target, for example, increase payment, promotion or work privileges. Reward power results in socially dependent change.
- Coercion- leader brings change by threatening with negative consequences, e.g. demotion; termination etc. if the target does not comply.
- Legitimate- followers accept leader's right to lead change-socially independent
- Expertise- followers accept leader's superior knowledge-socially independent
- Referent- follower sees a leader as a role model-socially independent

It is difficult to identify what bases of power are effective. 'It should be clear that there is no simple answer' (Raven, 2008, p.9). However, the first three forms of power are problematic while the others are preferential in Bangladeshi perspective. Informational power leads to private acceptance and difficult to implement as it requires much time and effort. The characteristics of reward power and coercive power are almost the same. Both are socially dependent and require surveillance. Coercive power makes the leader distrust and demeaning the target that ultimately leads the leader to be more powerful. Lord John Acton (1834-1900) says that 'power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. On the other hand, the remaining three forms of power are almost identical and less problematic. These are primarily socially independent and surveillance is not necessary.

Now, it is important to discuss the relationship between leadership styles or power in Bangladeshi context. In the educational institutions, the teacher's best performance largely depends on good understanding and interaction with the students that ultimately help to build up educated and skilled manpower. In that case, teacher's leadership style can be considered as democratic. In a democratic style, the focus of power is with the group as a whole and is an active interaction within the group (Mullins, 2013 and Northouse, 2015). Here, teacher's power strategy can be compared with Raven's (2008) two bases of power. One is referent power because student sees the teacher as a role model and generally student likes teacher. Another is expert power because student accepts the teacher's superior knowledge and student assumes that the teacher can solve the problems well.

Similarly, teacher's role can be explained in terms of coaching. Coaching means the processes and the type of interaction that help to realize another person's goals (Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 2016). Joyce and Showers (2002) indicate that when coaching is added to the teacher's traditional form of classroom practice, then the level of impact increases significantly. West and Milan (2001, cited in ACER, 2016) claim three dimensions of effective coaching which are very close to a teacher's activities. Firstly, professionalism- that included teacher's explicit conduct, personality, professional knowledge. Secondly, purpose- helping the individual so that creativity develops that helps to face challenges. Thirdly, the relationship- it is a collaborative work for creating self-awareness among the students. Sometimes the teachers can use Tannenbaum and Schmidt's (1958) 'give and take' style during their class sessions. After delivering

lectures, they can invite questions so that the students can better understand. This 'give and take' also enables teachers and students to develop ideas effectively. In this way, a teacher can also discover which students need special help and decide what kind of help they actually need.

On the other hand, 'mentoring refers to a relationship where more experienced individuals (e.g. principal), share their skills and knowledge with other, less experienced practitioners (ACER, 2016, p.12). So according to my present role, I am a mentee and my college principal mentors me. The mentor's work is like that of a counselor, she listens and makes me reflect (Bush, 1995, p.11). When we face any difficulties, the principal gives us suggestion and instructions. If the government introduces any new policy, principal advises us to follow that. Despite differences, both coaching and mentoring are considered to be a most important strategy of promoting leadership development (Rajan, 1996). Coaches and mentors think that through coaching and mentoring processes, people's inner resources can be promoted. Both approaches to education help to improve skills and knowledge of educational leaders and teachers (ACER, 2016). After all, my main role focuses on student individual's outcomes through coaching as Rajan (1996) thinks that mentoring is more career development oriented, but coaching help to improve the individual's performance.

Conclusion

The importance of leadership is increasingly recognized in any sector over the world. It is acknowledged that good leadership is needed to help guide followers through the challenges of standard living. The quality of leaders and leadership is more important to improve curriculum within educational settings that ultimately help the good educational atmosphere. Transformational leadership is the outcomes of charismatic and visionary leadership that is widely advocates harnessing stakeholders support for implementing the vision. The above analysis helps the stakeholders to gather knowledge about leadership, curriculum, vision and values, the barriers of leadership, and most popular approaches to leadership is transformational leadership with its strength and weakness that will definitely increase their existing capacity and sense of responsibilities to work in their respective working places.

In addition, the discussion of leadership style and its focus on supporting the development of educational institutions has helped the leaders to increase their existing managerial capabilities. The use of observations particularly in mentoring and coaching approaches that are aimed at developing students' learning outcomes will also help the leaders to promote an educational atmosphere in Bangladesh. This comprehensive study will also inspire them to share the ideas with other managerial authorities that really help to promote leadership strategies in the context of Bangladesh. Keeping this mind it is hoped that if we successfully address the challenges of leadership and follow the leadership styles within Bangladeshi education system, it would obviously facilitate the development of total educational scenario in Bangladesh. Furthermore, this study as the basis for future research in the same domain.