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The Concept of Educational Leadership: Exploring Macro-level Facets

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At the dawn of the twenty first century, there is anticipation for better educational reforms both at the structural and functional level. Heck and Hallinger (2005) have observed that although various disciplinary and interdisciplinary movements, in their attempt to understand the history of educational leadership, have critically approached the issue; at a practical level all efforts still reside in the same individualistic resort. Authors have cited ample research dictating the processes of leadership in organizations both at individual and collective level (Bass, 1990; Knipe & Maclay, 1972; Heine, 1971; Hogg, 2001; Sinha, 1980; Yukl, 1998, 2002) however, in the arena of educational settings, the leadership process has inadvertently been a neglected issue. Educational leadership as a concept was studied more in terms of leadership style of principal in school context (Bush, 2007), distributive practices (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004), or comparison of different cultures (Tang, Yin, & Min, 2011). However, a more critical stance of educational leadership at the macro-level – a dimension which affects the lives of individuals in the long run was not much emphasized. The manner in which Hofstede (1980) questioned the applicability of American leadership theories abroad apparently seems limited when compared with the universalized approach of educational leadership as emerging discipline. This universalization of the concept of educational leadership defies the ontology of its socio-political system and is epistemologically seeking space in inflated way. Why the psychology of individuals in any enterprise or educational setting is not the same pertains more to socio-political systems, cultural endorsements, polarization of culture at the hands of educational leaders and also to ideological framework which shapes the psychology in different way (Kincheloe, 1999).

Tracing the background

In their evaluation of the current status of research in educational leadership, Heck and Hallinger (2005) highlighted five major points. Firstly, there is less agreement about significant problems. Secondly, the direction of looking at educational leaders has a more humanistic and moral endeavour than a (*aforesaid*) scientific one. Thirdly, despite having access to diverse and robust methodological tools, sustained empirical researches are few in number. Fourthly, a reluctance to see and evaluate diversity through a conceptual and methodological approach makes researchers, policy-makers and practitioners fall back upon individual judgments of what is useful and valid knowledge. Finally, there is a necessity of empirical rigor in the field. Although researchers have found a shift in the process of understanding the present stand of educational leadership, the role of context and situation are inevitable forces in understanding it.

The following questions come to our mind when dealing with educational leadership; and these have

been the focus of the present paper:

1. Are we not forcibly dealing with educational leadership where theories of leadership from market oriented enterprises are being applied to educational settings?
2. When dealing with educational leadership how the organizational value is different for two types of organization (schools and other enterprises) and how these values reflects or represents the societal value system?
3. If we can solve the above conflict then the queries shape itself like this “Is the phenomenon of educational leadership still somewhere lie in the individual leader who is appointed through the processes of state machinery or it is the culture and ideology which shaped its present structure in the history of political conflicts and social upheaval, for example, traditionality verses modernity verses postmodernity?”
4. And then “how psychological perspective of people is framed and reframed on the time plane with every political and social subduction due to which it again shape the educational system and complete the vicious cycle of reverting back to politics of dominance?”

Heck and Hallinger (2005) have pointed out that educational leadership is a theoretically informed domain but its limitation lies in its assumption about universality. The present paper is based on the analysis of status of educational leadership (Heck & Hallinger, 2005) as mentioned above. Through this paper, an effort will be made to explore various contextual underpinnings which have shaped the present breed of educational leadership, epistemologically. In the present article educational leadership is specifically dealt within the school context.

What is Moral in Educational Leadership?

Sergiovanni (1992) asserted that professional and moral domains carry higher level of leadership authority and when professional authority becomes a driving force, leaders rely on standards of practice and professional norms as reason to appeal to teachers for action or change (p. 40). Intimate involvement of school leaders with teachers and students is the mark of a successful leader (Sergiovanni, 1992). In addition to this, Sergiovanni (1992) stated that people are naturally morally responsive and rise above their self interest for duty and obligations. This moral proposition of Sergiovanni's is consistent with Burns's (1978) transformational leadership and Maslow's (1954) higher level of needs (as cited in Wong, 1998, p. 117). Wong (1998) clubbed Sergiovanni's (1992) leadership authority, Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs and Burns (1978) leadership model into a more cohesive model of moral leadership applied to education. These clubbed notions of leadership were consistent with the management-style of thinking which emphasise on participation, collaboration, collegiality, enabling and empowerment and building trusting relationship within organisations (Peters & Waterman, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1989; Vaill, 1986; Yukl, 1994). Moral leadership inculcates the factors dominant in the latest management thinking which is far away from the extremities of the bureaucratic, technical-rational form of administration (Wong, 1998). According to Wong (1998), Sergiovanni's verdict is driven by duality in the sense that moral leadership on the part of the principal is a two way processes. Leaders on one hand appeal to the follower's value and then at the second phase of duality, their possession of the following values as righteousness, obligation, and goodness come to be regarded as a major hallmark of pragmatic moral-standing in the present educational system. All the above moral conceptualizations have been on the platform of criticism in the light of non-attainment of

results and goals which schools had longed for (Angus, 1989; Maxcy, 1991).

The educational system throughout the world has been modified through the use of basic bureaucratic administrative principles (Wong, 1998). This approach of leadership was questioned by Sergiovanni (1992) to address the complexity of modern schools, as a myth that good management is tough minded which incapacitates rationality, fore-planning, monitoring, managing with certainty and decision-making with logicity (Wong, 1998, p. 114). Schools are like people, a unique entity and this uniqueness is captured by the notion of school culture, context and from concrete events and personalities and not from a set of abstractions or general laws which includes school structure and policy (Greenfield, 1986, p. 143). Wong (1998), emphasized approaches that seek to build shared vision and goal within a community of people (p. 115). In this context, value congruency and value based mission binds leaders and followers together (Sergiovanni, 1991; Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1986; Vaill, 1986).

Structure, climate and interactions are different in different entities, namely schools and enterprises. Schools are civil associations and as such differ fundamentally from enterprise associations like corporations (Wong, 1998, P. 115). It was asserted that schools hold moral responsibility of educating society's youth and its methods are different from the enterprises where leaders and managers hold different notions about youth, as unit for best performance in enterprise's arena. Local context and the community where the schools are operating are determining factors of the schools obligations in the attainment of the school goals. Enterprise works for profits and so the units of these enterprises are trained into that proportions strategically, where they mostly apply participatory decision-making style in degrees according to the needs of management in their profit making goals, whereas schools have different notions of democratic and participatory decision-making processes in order to attain the schools goal but most of the time things become limited up to management level and it gets unrelated to the outcomes of students achievement (Wong, 1998) and other moral dimensions of values and skill development (Goodlad et al, 1990, p. xii). In defence of schools regarding its efficiency, it has been argued that school is smaller in its size when compared to enterprises where infrastructure, number of employees and process of administrations are different from schools with bureaucratic system of administration, whereas schools give more personal style of leadership (Sergiovanni, 1996; Wong, 1998). However, school as microcosm of a society reflects more Eurocentric value system where students and other units from diverse culture may not witness the same kind of personalized leadership as witnesses for other units providing match with Eurocentric value system. These disjunction and oddities can also be seen in curriculum and pedagogies despite leadership styles which may portray the whole system of education as banking system of education (Friere, 1978; Kincheloe, 1999) and developing oppositional collective identity among the units such as students and staff from diverse backgrounds (Ogbu, 2008).

Leadership is both a subjective and normative construct (Wong, 1998, p.116); and it maybe conceptualized in many ways namely, bureaucratic, psychological, rational-logical, professional and moral where the psychology of leadership draws its authority from motivation and human relation skills and is transactional in nature focusing on control through reward system (Wong, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1992). There are many broader factors which derive the above-mentioned conceptualization of leadership including social identification of units, sociocultural factors and contextual underpinnings.

Theoretical Perspectives of Educational Leadership

Earlier social researches originated from different schools of thought such as positivist, interpretive (phenomenological), and socially critical and each has delivered several theoretical approaches (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Soltis, 1984). But each of the above paradigms has some ideological commitment instead of some universally reliable truths (Macpherson, 1996) which has made true categorization of different approaches difficult (Wolcott, 1992). This difficulty is felt very much in the field of educational administration where complexity in understanding the influence of epistemological and methodological frameworks is paramount (Heck, 1998). Much of the first and second orientations toward research on school administration (such as the nature of administrative work and the effect of administrators' work) are embedded in the rational and structural-functional orientations toward human organisations (Heck, 1998, p. 58). In the process of assessing the impact of educational leadership, specifically, school leadership across cultural settings, it was found that educational leadership was studied from different epistemological framework and with both qualitative and quantitative methods (Heck, 1998; also see Donmoyer, 1999; Everhart, 1988; Foster, 1986).

In the west, characteristic and description based studies were on the verge till early 1980's (Bridges, 1982). This resulted into creation of a list of traits together with the time spending on individual tasks (Gronn, 1984; Kmetz & Willower, 1981; Peterson, 1978). Qualitative and quantitative methods applied to decipher the correlates of effective schools and traits of effective administrators had been the centre of descriptive studies done in the school context which was exclusively not applicable to the broader context in which the school often acts as a microcosm of society (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Heck, 1998). Much of the earlier researches on school leadership examined the relation of personal traits of administrators such as experience, gender, intelligence, training, locus of control, and leadership style that correlated with success in schools (Salley, McPherson, & Baehr, 1979; cited in Heck, 1998, p.58) but this approach toward principal leadership was full of loopholes because administrative traits have proven to be neither valid indicators of important theoretical domains of leadership nor consistent predictors of school outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 1996b; Heck, 1991; Slater, 1995; cited in Heck, 1998, p.58).

Trait theory was earlier replaced by structural functionalism, which focussed on locating the relationship between various societal and organisational subsystem's namely social, political and economic (Heck, 1998) and also on norms, values, and ideal structural framework under which various activities took place (Lewellen, 1992). Societies were perceived as relatively closed systems containing their own cultures, values and mechanism (structures) striving for intergenerational equilibrium (Lewellen, 1992). In educational settings, structural-functional approaches have been applied in the hope that organizational structure reflects an adaptive purpose (Willower, 1996). As the past researches on leadership focussed on position, traits, and behaviour, so, the above paradigm have been labelled as technical-rational view of leadership (Ogawa and Bossert, 1995). According to the above statement, leadership is seen as an influence process which individuals in higher position exert through their demographic traits (such as experience, education) and actions on culture and performance of an organisation which is more or less synonymous with the bureaucratic model, suggesting that the hierarchical structure of leader authority functions to maintain the organisation's stability over time through minimizing conflict (Heck, 1998, p. 59). Despite a call for flexibility (Anderson, 1990, 1991; Greenfield, 1980; Maxcy, 1995; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995) and greater outlook, a rational approach maintains its position in the field of educational administration (Heck, 1998).

Under the realm of role or political-conflict perspective, leadership orientation has been studied in the

limelight of power relations (Hoy, 1994). Political-conflict perspective (Anderson, 1991; Bass & Avolio, 1989; Blase, 1989, 1993; Greenfield, 1991; Jantji & Leithwood, 1996) have contrasted a more functionalist approach of leadership traits, position, and behaviour and concentrated more on understanding political turmoil surrounding the efforts to reform or restructure schools (Heck, 1998, p. 60). This approach relies on the process of administration through which leadership is expressed under varied and combined conditions of multiple goals, diverse instructional strategies, and relatively high degrees of teacher's autonomy. It was viewed that the model of transformational leadership is embedded in political-conflict framework, where focus is on collaboration between staff and administration with commitment on school improvement (Leithwood, 1994; Silins, 1994; Slater, 1995). The political-conflict approach express complex and multidirectional relationship between teachers and administration (Heck, 1998) where administration plays a subordinate role to teachers in the sense that they serve teachers and facilitate teaching and learning (Hoy & Miskel, 1996). In the rational model of school leadership, oversight is the major problem where micro-politics were more or less ignored (Heck, 1998). This model assumed political negotiation of order in the school system which is termed as leadership (Heck, 1998). Anderson (1990) opined about the unfolding of control and legitimization of activities at the school level. The above perspective opens up the possibility of cultural differences and value system prevailing in the particular setting where school is located and legitimization of hierarchy is the norm where people identify themselves to the socio-cultural dimensions in the process of threat avoidance.

Meaning and sense making in an organisational context are more modified forms of leadership orientations (Hoy, 1994) where leadership is "constructed" among the various participants in the school setting (Heck, 1998, p. 61). The sense making or constructivist approach to leadership shows the way leaders and other staff construct meaning surrounding school activities (Duke, 1986; Duke & Iwanicki, 1992; Everhart, 1988; Slater, 1995; Wolcott, 1973). Meaning behind the action, congruency of leader with the school context, meaning making and construction of reality were the major point of arguments on the part of constructivists. As Slater (1995) viewed leadership from the constructivist perspective in terms of meaning behind the action and the way it is communicated in relationships. From sense making perspective, the study of leadership could also focus on how leaders make sense out of change or reform (improvement) processes (Heck, 1998, p. 61). Sense making or constructivist perspective in the leadership theory extends to other major variables viz., teachers effort to resist change which is based on norms and values (Anderson, 1991; Corbett, Firestone, & Rossman, 1987; Levay, 2010; Ogawa, 1991), reforms and change implemented by the joint effort of teachers and leaders (Lambert, 1995), students construction of metaphors regarding principal leadership (Lum, 1997) or gender difference in the styles of principal leadership (Marshall, 1995; Oritz, 1992). In the context of constructivist dominance, several researchers have inadvertently tried to understand the process of problem solving by administrators. This is certain in many researches that role of values and cognition are paramount in the social and organisational decision makings (Beck, 1993; Begley, 1996; Hodgkinson, 1983, 1991; Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1992; Leithwood & Hallinger, 1993; Leithwood & Stager, 1989; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1991).

Other perspectives are critical, constructivist, feminist and related approaches, postmodernist and poststructuralist in which leadership is defined as more non-traditional, informal, and often interim (Heck, 1998, p. 62). The postmodern perspective focuses on variations surrounding the unit under study such as language, gender, class and ethnicity (Heck, 1998) and relying on single method will never fulfil the function (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In this sense, these various approaches provide a

means of examining more closely (by deconstructing) the manner in which scientific knowledge has been constructed in the past (Heck, 1998, p. 63).

It becomes important to explore and reframe the following question which has a determining influence on the societal construction of educational leadership that is, “what determines who will become a leader and who will not?” (Kets de Vries, 1993, p. 3). More suitable reframing of the above question pertaining to present objective can be in the context of systematization of education and working of educational leaders in the present system of education. An answer to the above question has been reflected in the metaphors and context of educational leadership and practiced in the form of various career phases of educational leadership having varied originations. Above all, it is the cultural practices, societal norms, colonial impacts, hierarchical impositions, dominant value system, history of oppression and present demand based on the global impact derived by the market which further decide the process of leadership as representing the societal value system through social construction of reality (Moscovici, 1993).

Metaphor and context of Educational Leadership

Meindle (1995) presents the follower-centric approach in identification of people with leaders which seems embedded in the process of educational discourses. These discourses construct the meaning system which creates frames of references for future identification in various levels of contexts through metaphors. These frames of reference shape how situations are defined and in turn determine what actions should take place (Gaziel, 2003). People hold mental models (Linn, Sherman & Gill, 2007) which capture social reality and preferences. Here, metaphors do the same task of expressing new understanding with old knowledge (Ciccaiari, 1998). By exploring metaphors which defines leadership practices, Linn, Sherman, and Gill (2007) emphasized that effectiveness of school lies in the leader's mental models which defines leadership practices. In this lieu, it would be appropriate to say that mental model of effective leader is first of all role model for future leaders and is constructed in the given social reality. However, Thomas Kuhn's suggested that, “what a man sees depends both upon what he looks at and also upon what his previous visual-conceptual experience has taught him to see” (1962, p.113). Therefore, how social representation of leadership is understood in particular context is a matter of metaphors which is not just man's inner experience but it is identified through the worldviews and value system (Morgan, 1997). These metaphors represent the mental model of leadership constructed and reconstructed in the prevalent discourse exchange (see Potter & Wetherell, 1987). But, it is the human nature to judge others in the person's own mental model and so the metaphors describing leader are so much variant and different depending on cultural and social context. Leadership can be defined in many ways and that's the matter of consensus and paradigms showing the importance of social construction of reality which is complex and differs in different groups based on different aspects of context. Context lies in the history of various aspects of society though it never mattered where the history was conceived and who did it on the time plane of mankind. There is a great deal of impact which context either social, situational or both fetch on people's psychology has never been accounted in the literatures dealing psychology in educational settings. In whatever sense the concept of educational leadership dealt in psychological literatures was never been overridden by individualistic traditions because context was always dealt though in disguise of universality. Following Seddon's (1994) work, Gronn and Ribbins (1996), differentiated three understanding of context viz., categorical, interpretive, and relational. Firstly, categorical understanding of context is more like snapshots of life where memory works like flashbulb when confined in particular situation. Secondly,

interpretive understanding of context denotes particular time and space where members negotiate meaning action. And thirdly, relational understanding emphasized social system reproduction and change.

Categorical context of educational leadership continued to demonstrate mainstream leadership dimensions (e.g., Leithwood, 1994; Yammarino & Bass, 1990) where the particularities of real-world circumstances and their constitutive role in structuring social actions and the actors are ignored (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996, p. 455). Interpretive or constructivist approach to context highlights the lived experience of real world actors which are situational derivation based on social construction of followers' implicit theories and attributions of leadership (e.g., Meindl, 1990). This approach was seen as eschewing historical and cultural explanations of causality and thereby denying "the possibility of causal explanations which do not rest on intentionality" (Seddon, 1994, p.47) and is said to lack an adequate explanation of power and inter-contextual relations (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996). In relational approach, contexts are understood as networks of hierarchically stratified, material institutional arrangements, peculiar to different forms of society (or social formations), which both provides opportunities for the expression, and constraint, of human agency. This is the result of deep seated historical and cultural causation (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996, p. 456).

Career Phases of Educational Leadership

Educational leadership has the possibility to be critically understood in a bigger context without any legacy of particular meta-theoretical orientation. However, leadership generally has many faces of control and particularly in organizational context (e.g., school), it works more formally due to its past legacies of colonial impact. The way educational leadership has borrowed from mainstream leadership theories, it has ignored the more vital aspects of cultural and contextual factors which may be reflected in four career phases. Gronn (1993, 1994) identified four career phases or stages of educational leadership namely, formation, accession, incumbency and divestiture. Formation is preparatory stage during which candidate shape themselves for prospective office and this process of formation are socialized into various institutional norms and values (e.g., morality, belief and authority). Three key agencies viz., family, school, and reference groups play important role at the stage of formation where there is a formation of character structure by generating a conception of self. Accession comes after phase of formation in which candidates rehearse or test their capacity by direct comparison with existing office bearers and the field of prospective rivals (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996). There is a formal effort to accomplice two important institutional tasks i.e., the construction of oneself as a credible successor for office and the acquisition of a marketable performance routine to convince talent spotter, panels and selectors. At the stage of accession, networks of peers, patrons, and sponsors are important social units to sustain the legitimacy of bureaucratic and colonial legacy. So, in the context of educational leadership they are increasingly relied on (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996). Incumbency is the next stage where there is hiring of institutional roles which depends on organizational and workplace norms (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996). Institutional roles comprise three elements viz., constraints, demands, and opportunities (Stewart, 1989). This shapes the incumbents nascent sense of self, style, and outlook (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996). The performance of institutional leadership roles entails exercising the responsibilities of office and facilitates expression of the leaders' sense of potency, ambition, and vision (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996, p. 466). There is also a variation in a number of roles varying qualitatively with respect to status and significance (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996). Last stage of career phase is divestiture comprising factors as aging, illness, or incapacity where leaders divest from their

roles (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996). This can be either beneficial or not beneficial depending on the types of divestiture (voluntary-involuntary and planned –unplanned).

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Above mentioned phases of career development were seen as more linear, sequential and chronological showing upward promotion towards various incentives and rewards (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996). Each phase encompasses a series of key development transition points of varying structural and psychological intensity (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996, p. 467). In some contexts, for example, India, subordinates romanticize their leader as nurturing together with the trait of task orientation (see Sinha, 1980). Career development in India and other developing ecological boundaries is driven by system of hierarchy and masculinity which portrays leaders as protecting and compassionate (see Kakkar, 2009). This career phase of leadership works in injunction with the preference of subordinate group and it is also very much in the identification process which so determine the formal career phase of leaders (Haslam, 2001; Hogg, 2001). However, this social identification process lies in the preference for leader as entrepreneur of identity (Reicher & Hopkins, 1996b) which is further embedded in the social construction of reality understood in metaphors.

Conclusion

Educational leadership has important role to play in understanding role of education, holistically. Above mentioned theoretical perspectives either described educational leadership from dimensions working outside the school or from dimensions residing inside the principal i.e., traits of principal. No attempt is made to understand educational leadership by collaborating the dimensions interactively. Role of contexts and metaphors driven by social forces was few in the literatures dealing with psychology of educational leadership (e.g., Beatty, 2000). Apart from processes involved in educational leadership, there is an urgent need to see the role of educational leadership in diverse culture and environment e.g., phases of career development of educational leaders. Educational leadership played varied and different role in different context. Ex-colonial countries have different notions of leadership in comparison to other countries which have never been colonized i.e., difference in the representation of educational leadership or other construct between orients and occidents (see Said, 1978). As Gronn (2003) highlighted the collaboration of macro-structure and micro-agency, it can be asserted that they are not apart but part of the process of understanding educational situation. Social stratifications and its historical impact on people's mind is important issue to be looked at while exploring the phenomenon of educational leadership. Other aspects of educational leadership such as effect of shared social identity in educational arena for emancipations in the viewpoint of different and diverse populations who were oppressed in the history is also a issue to be looked into.

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