

Is effective teaching effective leadership?

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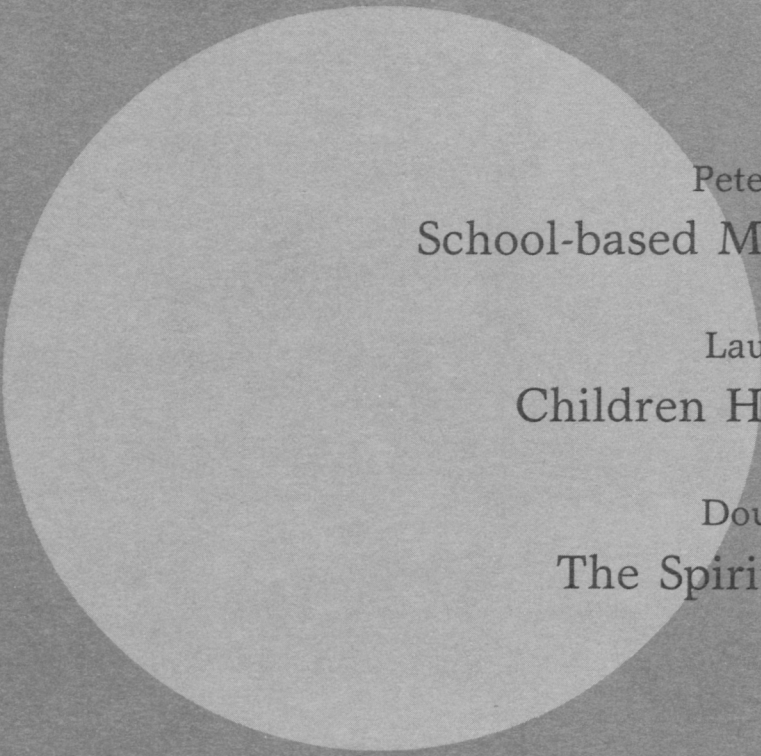
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Is Effective Teaching Effective Leadership ?

Is the same leadership required in teaching English and in teaching math, in teaching the French verb and in teaching French literature? Are different leadership qualities required at different grade levels? Does class size, or school size, or socio-economic group, or level of academic ability alter the style of leadership required of a teacher? We all feel they do, but we would probably have difficulty putting a finger on the precise dimensions of what is called for in each case. Newton sees great advantage in applying leadership theory and research to the tasks of teaching, especially in teacher training, and shows how these familiar problems of the classroom become illuminated in the light of concepts already known in business and industry and in educational administration. He shows too how the concept of a familiar and basic dichotomy, between teaching subject matter and teaching children, can be reformulated into a progression of styles of leadership enabling students to manage their own learning without any leadership at all.

Organizational theories and concepts have been widely applied in school settings. Over the past 30 years, research in areas such as organizational climate, social systems, bureaucracy, open systems theory, decision-making, role theory, organizational change, and motivation, have made their way from behavioral science disciplines to education. This journey has usually been completed after a stopover for translation and adaptation of the concepts to business and industrial organizations. Among the most frequent foci of interest have been leadership studies and their potential usefulness for educational organizations.

But applications of leadership theory to education have centered primarily on the leadership behaviour of school

administrators vis-a-vis their subordinates - the superintendent in relation to the administrators of the school system, the principal in relation to the faculty of the individual school. Little attention has been focused on the next organizational level, the leadership behaviour of teachers in relation to their students.(1) Yet it seems legitimate to see teachers as leaders and their classes as the groups they lead. Interpreting teaching as leading suggests a variety of ways to investigate the relationship between teaching and leadership and to explore whether effective teaching is not in large measure actually effective leadership.

Three dimensions of leadership

Much of leadership research converges on two basic dimensions, which have been given different names by various authors. Stogdill, in his narrative of the genesis of the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ), describes the emergence of two fundamental components of leadership behaviour: consideration and initiating structure.(2) Halpin used these same characteristics in studies of subjects ranging from air force wing commanders to school superintendents. Brown analyzed his data on school leadership in terms of system orientation and person orientation. An obvious similarity also exists between these two concepts and those of a variety of other authors: Barnard's effectiveness and employee orientation; Getzels, Lipham and Campbell's nomothetic and idiographic dimensions; Likert's performance goals and supportive relationships; Argyris' formal behaviour and individual behaviour; and Blake and Mouton's concern for production and concern for people. Each dichotomy separates and contrasts organizational, structural, and formal characteristics with personal, supportive and relationship-oriented characteristics.

Fiedler used the same division (task-motivated and relationship-motivated leader behaviours) and in addition emphasized the critical importance of the situation in which the individual was expected to lead. It was vital that leaders with the appropriate personal characteristics (predominant task orientation or predominant relationship orientation) be correctly matched to the appropriate situation. Fiedler also assumed that the personality traits of individuals (their disposition towards task or relationship oriented behaviour) remain stable. The critical elements of the situation are three: the level of positive relationship between leader and members, the degree to which tasks in the organization are structured, and the amount of positional power inherent in the leader's role. Leaders are successful when their personal strengths are fitted to the needs of the situation, and unsuccessful when strengths and situation are mismatched.

Hersey and Blanchard adopted Fiedler's situational emphasis by using the same dimensions of task and relationship, and

stressing and extending the importance of a leader accommodating to the situation in which the leader is placed. They picture the basic leadership styles as falling into four quadrants.



They define task and leadership behaviour in terms similar to their predecessors.

Task behaviour - The extent to which leaders are likely to organize and define the roles of the members of their group (followers), and to explain what activities each is to pursue, and when, where, and how tasks are to be accomplished. Characterized by endeavouring to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and ways of getting jobs accomplished.

Relationship behaviour - The extent to which leaders are likely to maintain personal relationships between themselves and members of their group (followers) by opening up channels of communication, providing socio-emotional support, "psychological strokes", and facilitating behaviours.

Hersey and Blanchard maintain that in a particular situation the leader's behaviour will fit generally into one of the four combinations of task/leadership emphasis illustrated by the four quadrants. But their theory deviates from most previous thinking on leadership in several important ways:

- it is assumed that the leader has the capacity, given the proper training, to adapt his or her behaviour to the situation;
- there is confidence in the capacity of the leader to combine behaviours in different proportions, dependent on the situation; and
- it is not assumed that the most effective leadership style is always high task and high relationship; in fact, their

theory proposes that a high task and high relationship style can often be counterproductive.

The maturity of the groups and appropriate leader behaviour

Basic to the Hersey and Blanchard approach is the assumption that the leader's behaviour must always be a function of the maturity of the group. The group moves through a "life cycle", starting with the need for direction and moving to a point where it is able to operate independently. Perhaps their theory is best illustrated by comparing it to the process of human growth and maturity. The child progresses through a cycle: from a state of total dependence where he or she is subject to the direction and protection of parents or adults; to a stage where direction is still high but there is also support for limited self-initiated behaviour; through a stage where parents reduce the level of direction, allowing the child to make his or her own decisions, while maintaining a high level of support for their child's decision; to a final stage where the child is independent of the parents' direction and can function without direct parental emotional support.

Hersey and Blanchard maintain that groups progress through similar stages. Just as parents must adapt their behaviour to the needs and stage of development of the child, so leaders in an organization must adapt their behaviour to the maturity of the groups they lead.(14)

IMMATURITY-----MATURITY

high task/ low relationship	high task/ high relationship	high relationship/ low task	low task/ low relationship
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Problems emerge when a parent treats a child who needs direction as though the child were capable of self-direction. The child is incapable of dealing with such independence at this stage of life. On the other hand, parents who fail to lessen their directive behaviour as their children are striving towards greater independence are likely either to encounter serious resistance or to run the risk of keeping their children destructively dependent on them. The same problem can emerge in an organization when a leader's behaviour is maladapted to the group's level of maturity. A group that is accustomed to a high task-oriented and directive style will be confused when a new leader suddenly expects a high level of initiative and independent problem-solving. Similarly, a group that has developed to the point where it needs minimal direction and supervision will quickly be in conflict with a new superior who attempts close supervision of its activities and insists on making decisions on every issue.

Thus the basic themes of the Blanchard and Hersey situational theory emerge: Leaders must be able to diagnose the stage of maturity of their groups and must know what combination of task/relationship behaviour they must display in order for the group to be effective and to continue to grow towards greater maturity. Much current-day leadership training in organizations (including training programs for educational administrators) focuses on the goals of sensitizing the leader to the personal and task dimensions of their own behaviour and of developing their capacity to recognize what is appropriate and when it is appropriate.

Applications of the Hersey and Blanchard model to the administration of schools are to a large extent obvious. The principal is the leader of the school; the superintendent is the leader of the school system. A cursory review of Dissertation Abstracts in the 20 years since the development of the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire reveals a significant amount of research on subordinates' perceptions of principals and superintendents on consideration and initiating structure dimensions. In both cases, correlations have been attempted with a wide variety of factors: level of innovation, educational achievement, faculty morale, open or closed organizational climate, and so on.

Most teachers have witnessed different leadership styles when administrators at the building or system level have changed. They have experienced the contrast of leader behaviours and leader expectations that occur when a high task/low relationship principal replaces a high relationship/low task principal. The confusion and conflict which often result fit neatly into the Hersey and Blanchard framework.

While it is interesting to speculate on further applications of the Hersey and Blanchard approach to the administration of schools (most of the previous research was done on the basis of the more static initiating structure and consideration concepts), it may be more fascinating to explore the implications of their theory for the next organizational level, the interaction between teachers and students.

The teacher as leader

It is not difficult to see the teacher as the leader of the group which is his or her class.⁽³⁾ The teacher must display behaviour which both holds the group together and ensures that it will accomplish the goals set for the particular course. Usually the objectives are defined at the beginning of the course, and the teacher's role is to structure activities which will lead to their achievement. Adjustments may be required as the course progresses and the teacher becomes more aware of the capacities and levels of interest of the members of the class.

The teacher must also demonstrate an interest in the class

as a group and in individual students. The class, as a class, should be drawn together in a sense of common enterprise and develop a positive group spirit, in order to achieve the full potential of the learning experience. Students must sense that the teacher is personally concerned about them as individuals whom he or she sincerely likes. The often-heard complaint of a class or of an individual that the teacher does not like it or him or her is an indication of the students' expectation that teachers should display a personal interest in them.

Thus the members of a class expects its leader to help them accomplish the goals of the class, to assist them to learn math or American history or Spanish, and, at the same time, to convey the sense that he or she is sincerely interested in them as persons both within and outside of the common task in which they are involved.

The suggestion that teaching is in large part leading prompts a variety of fascinating questions. Most generally, is the key to effective teaching actually effective leadership? Are effective teachers persons who both lead their classes to the accomplishment of their learning objectives and at the same time communicate a strong sense of personal concern for their students?

Conversely, is poor teaching actually poor leadership? The brilliant teacher whose knowledge of subjects may surpass all other faculty members is sometimes among the weak teachers in the school. No principal or teacher would propose that erudition alone makes an effective teacher. Most supervisors would prefer a teacher whose knowledge is adequate, but whose ability to organize learning experiences and whose rapport with students is superior, to the brilliant teacher with poor organization and weak rapport.

Given that there are two basic dimensions to leadership, behaviour that is task-oriented and behaviour that is relationship-oriented, is the most effective teacher the person who ranks high on both dimensions?(4) Or do particular situations require a change in leadership style and a varying mixture of these two dimensions? What variables influence the type of leadership behaviour which is appropriate?

- The subject taught - is the same leader behaviour required in teaching English and in teaching math? Or is more task-oriented behaviour appropriate in teaching math because of the nature of the subject?
- Do different objectives within the same discipline (or perhaps the same course) require different kinds of leadership? Is the same leader behaviour required in teaching the French verb as in teaching French literature?
- Are different leadership qualities required when teaching at different levels? Do freshmen require teachers with higher initiating structure than seniors?(5)
- Does the number of years of teaching experience make a difference to a teacher's emphasis? For example, are

older teachers seen as higher in initiating structure and younger teachers higher in consideration?

- Does class size have an effect on the leadership style possible and appropriate with a particular group? Similarly, does the overall size of the school affect the type of behaviour possible within classes, promoting perhaps more initiating of structure in larger, more bureaucratically organized schools, or higher levels of consideration in smaller schools where greater face-to-face interaction is possible?
- Do students of different levels of academic ability require different amounts of consideration or of initiating structure behaviour from their teachers?
- Do students from different socio-economic groups require different leadership styles; thus, do students from affluent suburbs have needs and expectations which are different from students from lower-class inner-city schools?
- Do individual schools demonstrate and promote a particular style of leadership behaviour, so that the behaviour of teachers as leaders in a particular school is encouraged or determined in a certain direction?

Implications for the training of teachers

If effective teaching is actually effective leadership, then developing effective teachers means in significant part training them to be leaders. Teachers should be introduced to leadership research and given leadership training experiences similar to that of their principals, only with an emphasis on the unique characteristics of leadership in a classroom setting. Such training would develop a new perception of the teacher role, one which emphasizes, in ways which had not been obvious in the past, the importance of leadership skills. If a model similar to the Hersey and Blanchard proposal were adopted, teachers could become expert in the diagnosis of level of maturity of particular classes and the teacher behaviour appropriate to that level. At present, teacher trainees are schooled in different methods of teaching so that they can adapt their teaching to the needs of the students or to the requirements of the subject matter. Interpreting teaching as leading, they would simultaneously be expected to acquire a theoretical and practical understanding of the different styles of leadership and to know what style is appropriate in a particular situation.

The task of supervision is seen from a new and valuable perspective when teaching and leading are joined. The supervisor now draws on the treasury of theoretical and practical insights of leadership research and training and applies them to the supervisory task. A new analytic framework provides a novel and productive way to view classroom teaching and teacher and student interaction. The supervisor begins to view supervision in a new light and with a new important

purpose: the analysis and development of teachers as leaders. He or she becomes a facilitator whose goal is to develop classroom leaders by helping the teachers understand their leadership styles and judge whether they are appropriate and productive, or less effective than they might be. Properly presented, reflection on their leadership styles could provide a dramatic new insight for teachers into the nature of their role.

Obviously, a new concentration on leadership behaviour would have implications for inservice programs. Like workshops held for principals in general leadership theory or in emerging techniques of leadership, teachers could begin to profit from the same body of research, only applied to the unique situation of the classroom.

Conclusion

At the outset of this paper, it was suggested that, while the past two decades have seen important developments in the understanding of leadership behaviour, very little of this research and its practical implications has been applied to teachers. Yet, the interpretation of teaching as leading brings to the classroom level a wide range of exciting possibilities. The present emphasis on the importance of the situation, in determining the most effective leadership behaviour, suggests even more dramatic application to teaching. Possibly more than any other societal institution, education must adapt itself to a tremendous variety of situations: the wide range of ages and levels of maturity of its clients, the variations of knowledge and behaviour among students from different socio-economic groups, the differences in content and method among disciplines. Hence the leadership behaviour of a teacher must depend on the situation: whether the students are kindergarten children or doctoral students, whether the school is located in an affluent suburb or a decaying section of the inner city, whether the class is first year algebra or French literature.

The description presented above leads more to a series of questions than to a statement of firm conclusions: can the insights developed in leadership research and training be applied to the teacher as leader? Can viewing teaching as leading provide teachers, principals, and supervisors with a new and powerful way of analyzing and improving their work?

If the contingencies of the situation are as important as contemporary leadership research suggests, the first task of a teacher upon meeting a new class should be to assess its general level of maturity and to adapt his or her behaviour to the needs of the group. And an explicit objective of each teacher should be to develop the capacity of the group and its members along the scale from immaturity to maturity, to pursue its goals **without** constant direction from its leader - developing students into self-initiating learners who can function independently of close supervisory leadership.

Obviously, my own conclusion is that viewing teaching as leading provides numerous and potentially powerful implications for teachers reflecting on their performance, for supervisors in their analysis of classroom behaviour, and for researchers in their investigations into the nature of effective teaching and learning.

NOTES

1. Donald A. Erickson describes the desirability of redirecting researchers' attention to the lower organizational levels. "Research on Educational Administration: The State of the Art," *Educational Researcher*, 8 (March, 1979), 9-14. Kinicki and Schriesheim also note the concentration of educational leadership research on administrative levels, but point out the recent interest in exploring the leadership behaviour of teachers. Angelo J. Kinicki and Chester A. Schriesheim, "Teachers as Leaders: A Moderator Variable Approach," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 70 (December, 1978), 928-35.
2. See Chapter 11, "Leader Behaviour: Consideration and Initiating Structure," in Ralph M. Stogdill, *Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of Theory and Research* (New York: Free Press, 1974).
3. Chermesh and Tzelgov, in their investigation of college teachers as leaders, conclude that there is clear evidence that the class is "... a setting for group interaction, where the instructor is expected to hold leadership functions" (p.114). Ran Chermesh and Joseph Tzelgov, "The College Instructor as Leader: Some Theoretical Derivations from a Generalization of a Causal Model of Students' Evaluations of Their Instructors," *Journal of Educational Research*, 73, (November/December, 1979), 108-15.
4. Kinicki and Schriesheim point out that the initial investigation of teacher leadership has focused on discovering the "one best" teacher leadership style and only now is beginning to incorporate the situation as a critical component. Leadership research in other organizations, as described in the beginning of the present paper, proceeded through the same two-stage development. Kinicki and Schriesheim, p. 928.
5. The research of Lahat-Mandlebaum and Kipnis uncovered clear differences among college freshman-sophomore, junior-senior, and graduate students in correlations between teaching effectiveness and the consideration/initiating structure dimensions. Undergraduate students were much more likely than graduate students to view a high level of consideration favourably. Bat-Sheva Lahat-Mandlebaum and David Kipnis, "Leader Behaviour Dimensions Related to

Students' Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 58 (October, 1973), 250-53.

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