

Relationships Between Higher Education Leaders and Subordinates in Pakistan: A Path-Goal Approach

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Abstract

This article is based on a quantitative research to examine the leadership behaviour of degree college principals, selected personal and organizational characteristics, acceptance of leadership, faculty job satisfaction and job expectancies. Leadership style was defined in four dimensions – directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented. The measuring instrument comprised 120 items and was administered to the randomly selected sample of 854 lecturers and 138 principals. Twenty-six hypotheses were tested in educational setting. MANCOVA and ANCOVA were used to discover the moderating affect of situational variables on the relationship of leadership style and subordinates' outcomes, controlling the effect of role ambiguity and stress of the principals. The moderators tested in three-way interactions included need for autonomy, need for achievement, perception about ability, locus of control, task structure and stress. Findings indicated that the support for House's path-goal theory was limited. Only 16 of the 26 three-way interactions accorded with the predictions of theory.

Introduction

Leadership is complex and deeply relevant to educational effectiveness. It has been heavily researched: Stogdill's (1974) analysed some 3,000 selected studies; Bass (1981) added two thousand further studies; and research publications have further increased up to today. We can sum up the general conclusions thus: Leaders with courage and vision make a great difference to their organisations, whereas weak leaders cannot exploit the potential of talented subordinates nor contribute towards institutional effectiveness. Successful leaders motivate their subordinate in such a way that they give a hundred percent to achieve the ultimate objectives of the organization. In education, leadership plays a critical role, and as such is an important subject for study and research.

The long history of reliance on 'great-man theories' naturally led to the search for traits of leadership and theories of traits (Evans, 1970; Stogdill, 1974; Bass, 1990). As researchers failed to find universal traits or

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leader behaviours that are effective in all situations, they began to turn their attention to *situational* factors that influence leadership effectiveness. Since no one leader behaviour is good for all situations (Fiedler, 1965; House, 1971; House & Mitchell, 1974; Huse & Bowditch, 1977; Bass, 1990) the manager needs to find a particular behaviour suitable to a particular situation. Such a theory is called a *situational theory of leadership*. Such theories are concerned with the moderating influence of situational variables on the relationship between leader behaviour and end result variables such as group performance.

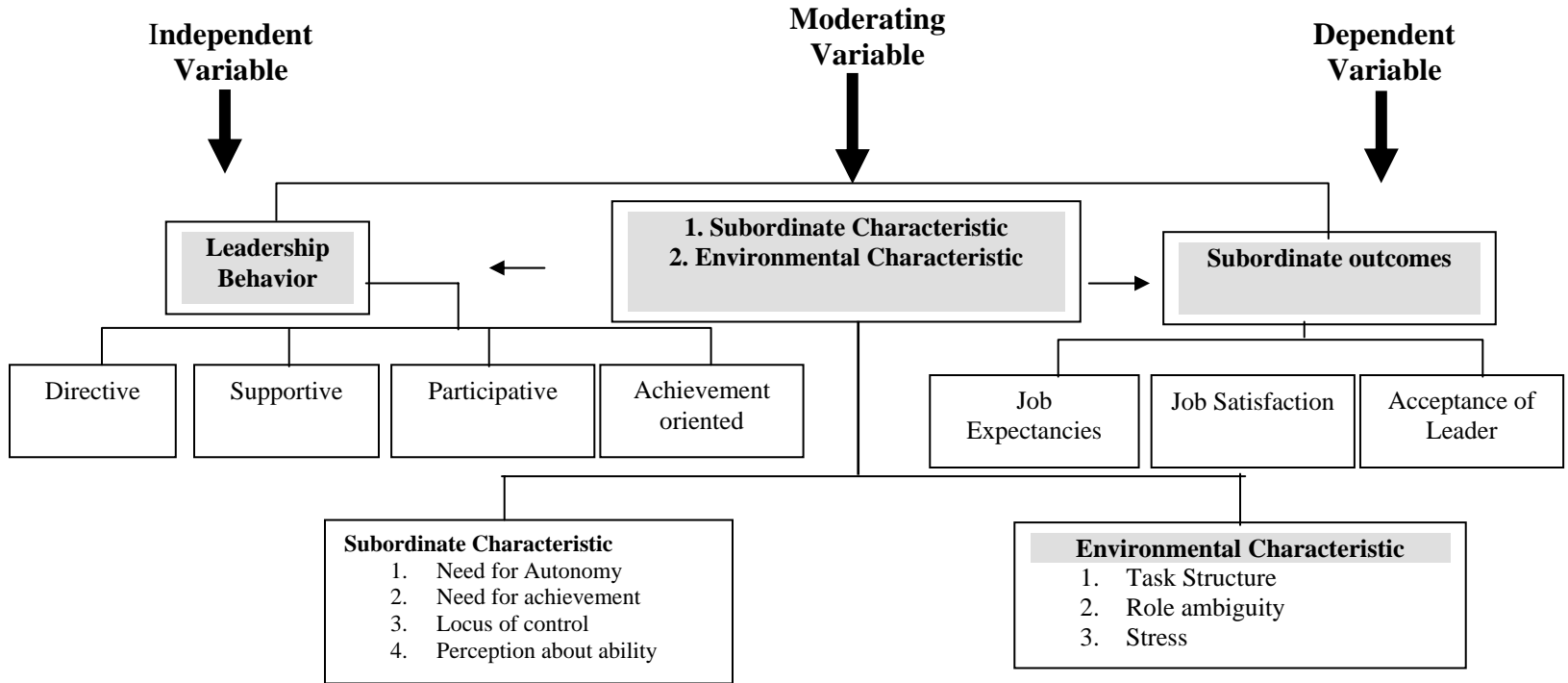
Robert House's *path-goal theory* is one of these situational theories of leadership. This theory is rooted in Victor Vroom's theory of motivation involving *valence* (importance ascribed), *expectancy* (of success) and *instrumentality* (i.e. that the desired outcome will be achieved). The work of House and his associates (House, 1971; House & Dessler, 1974; House and Mitchell, 1974; House and Baetz, 1979; House, 1996) provided an important step in situational or contingency investigations. The theory is based on the notion that leader behaviour becomes acceptable and satisfying to their subordinates only to the extent that the subordinates see such behaviour as either an immediate source of satisfaction or as instrumental to future satisfaction (House, 1971).

When leadership behaviour is being studied, either from a business or an academic perspective, it is often linked with employee job satisfaction that is an overall attitude of liking one's job. The presence of high levels of job satisfaction is frequently accepted as an *outcome* of leadership behaviour (Campbell, 1977; Mes, 1983; Kim, 1986; Bass, 1990; Hart, 1995; Hayat, 1998; Hardman, et al 2000; Leary, et al. 2001).

Enhancing faculty job satisfaction is a major challenge for higher education administrators today. It is extremely important to identify some of those factors which lead to increased job satisfaction within academic settings, and path-goal theory may provide a useful framework to discuss the factors affecting job satisfaction. The characteristics of educational institutions are different from those of business organizations and therefore require different leadership skills. For this reason, it is important that researchers in higher education should study leadership and job satisfaction issues using their own populations and their own specific problems in their own environment rather than relying on the results of studies conducted in business and industry.

This statistical study tests the path-goal theory of leadership in educational settings in Government Degree Colleges in the Punjab, Pakistan. It investigated professional relationships between degree college principals, and college lecturers, leadership behaviour, faculty job satisfaction, the level of acceptance of the leader and professional expectancies. Various moderators were tested in three-way interactions: these included task structure, stress, role ambiguity, the need for autonomy, the need for

Schematic Presentation of the Variables Under Study



achievement, perception about ability and locus of control. Leadership style was defined in four dimensions, *directive*, *supportive*, *participative*, and *achievement-oriented*. Because insufficient data emerged about the role ambiguity of the teachers, this variable was excluded as a moderating variable.

House describes the path-goal theory of leadership as a situational theory that is deliberately phrased and loosely structured so that additional variables can be added as the effects of these variables become known. So Robert House's suggestion (personal communications, June 21, 2002) stress was added to the theory as a moderator variable and also as a confounding variable. Stress was studied at two levels – stress of the subordinates that could effect the relationship of leadership and subordinates' outcomes; and stress of the leader that could effect the leader's rationality in decision-making. House asserted: "Tests of the theory have been very mixed. My belief is this is because the theory assumes too much rationality on the part of the leader and leaders working under stress cannot be highly rational." This study is unique in using stress as a variable and in controlling the effect of intervening variables (stress and role ambiguity) that are the cause of irrationality in decision making by the leaders.

Questions

In order to determine the relationships between leadership styles and subordinates' outcomes, parameters for the study were established by the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between leader behaviour and subordinates' acceptance of leadership, job expectancies and subordinates' job satisfaction that prefer *autonomy and self-control*, holding constant the effect of principals' stress?
2. What is the relationship between leader behaviour and subordinates' job satisfaction, which have *internal locus of control, or external locus of control*, holding constant the effect of principals' role ambiguity and stress?
3. What is the relationship between leader behaviour and subordinates' acceptance of leadership, job expectancies and subordinates' job satisfaction, *with greater the perceived ability*, holding constant the effect of principals' role ambiguity and stress?
4. What is the relationship between leadership behaviour and subordinates' acceptance of leader, job expectancies and subordinates' job satisfaction, *with high need for achievement*, holding constant the effect of Principals' role ambiguity and stress?
5. What is the relationship between leader behaviour and subordinates' acceptance of leader, job expectancies and subordinates' job satisfaction, when the *task is highly structured*, holding constant the effect of principals' role ambiguity and stress?

6. What is the relationship between leadership behaviour and subordinates outcome as moderated by *stress* of the subordinates, holding constant the effect of principals' role ambiguity and stress?

Method

The population of the study consisted of Principals and teaching staff of every male and female degree college in the province of Punjab, Pakistan. The total number of degree colleges in Punjab was 285 (Male 144, Female 141) and the number of working staff was 13,821 (Male 8195, Female 5626), according to the statistics of Directorate of Public Instruction (Colleges) Punjab, in the year 2003.

The sample size of the study comprised of 170 Government Degree Colleges and 1020 teachers (lecturers, assistant professors, Associate professors, professors) teaching in these colleges. All thirty-four districts of Punjab were included in the sample. Six degree colleges (3 male, 3 female) from each district and 6 teachers from each college were selected randomly.

Instrumentation

The questionnaire for this study consisted of a combination of instruments. Questionnaires related to each of the independent, moderating, and dependent variables, were combined in order to make one comprehensive questionnaire that participants could fill. All these instruments used in this study had been developed specifically to test the path-goal theory and had been used by many researchers (House and Dessler, 1974; Oppenheimer, 1981; Romeo, 1992) and declared reliable. For subordinate characteristics new questionnaires were constructed entitled "Subordinates' Personal Characteristics Scale", after extensive study of related literature and wide ranging consultation with the educational experts (House & Terence, 1974; Huse & Bowditch, 1977; Bass, 1981; Herbert, 1982; Yukl, 1989; Alkin, 1991; Anita, 1998; Clinard & Foster, 1998; Fullan, 1998; Goldman, 1998). The questionnaire was based on five point scale which measured the high and low dimension of all the four characteristics (locus of control, need for autonomy, need for independence, and perception about abilities).

Data Analysis

All computations were made by utilizing SPSS-10 Software Package. Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) and univariate Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) were used to test the hypotheses of this study (Afifi, & Clark, 1996). Before conducting ANCOVA analysis, the *homogeneity-of-slopes* assumption was first tested. There is an important assumption underlying a one-way ANCOVA. That is the covariate is linearly related to the dependent variable within all levels of the factor, and the weights or slopes

relating the covariate to the dependent variable are equal across all levels of the factor. Wiersma, (1995) explains that if the interaction between factor and covariate is significant, the results from ANCOVA are not meaningful, and ANCOVA should not be conducted. The tests of homogeneity-of-slopes were conducted on all possible combinations of variables. The covariate that came up with non-significant interaction was included in data analysis. All hypotheses were tested at .05 level of significance. An independent-sample *t* test was conducted to evaluate the mean difference of male and female respondents. The test was non-significant, so it was decided to run data analysis without consideration of gender. The four leadership behaviours were categorized into high, medium and low groups. However the results of only high and low groups were cited and discussed for most of the time in data analysis. The alpha was used at .05 level of significance in all tests of hypotheses.

Findings

The following results were consistent with path-goal theory. Leadership where the description 'directive' was said to be low had a positive effect on the acceptance of the leader among subordinates who prefer autonomy and self-control. High participative leadership had a positive effect on these subordinates' job expectancies. Directive leadership had a positive relationship with 'acceptance of the leader' when the subordinates had external locus of control. High participative leadership had a positive effect on subordinates' job expectancies, who had internal locus of control.

High directive leadership contributed negatively in job satisfaction with supervision and job in general. High directive leadership had inverse relationship with acceptance of the leader, in cases where subordinates need for achievement was high.

Directive leadership had inverse relationship with subordinates' acceptance of the leader, and contributed negatively in job satisfaction with supervision and the job in general, when subordinates have a high perception about their ability. High achievement-oriented leadership had a positive effect on subordinates' job expectancies and job satisfaction, in cases where subordinates had a high need for achievement. The results reveal that subordinates are more motivated in cases where they work with a participative leader and have high perception about their ability. High participative leadership had a positive effect on subordinates' job expectancies, with high need for achievement. The subjects working under directive and participative leadership had inverse relationship with acceptance of leader when the task was structured. This result is consistent with path-goal theory, because theory states that when the task is highly structured, directive and participative leadership is not needed and is unnecessary and people are more comfortable with supportive leader.

There were observable effects on job satisfaction. Supportive leadership had positive relationship with job satisfaction in cases where the subordinates had low need for achievement. People were more satisfied with high supportive leaders in a structured task situation. This result also confirms the path-goal theory that when subordinates have a task that is structured or routine a supportive and a considerate leader motivates a subordinate by minimizing the negative aspects of the work environment. High directive leadership and high participative leadership contributed negatively in job satisfaction under the categories supervision, co-worker and job in general when the task was structured. This finding is again consistent with the path-goal theory that subordinates are more satisfied with directive and participative leaders in an unstructured task.

The additional variable stress had negative significant correlation with the acceptance of the leader and job satisfaction. It means that this variable had the potential to be included as a moderating variable in path-goal theory. High directive and supportive leadership had positive effect on subordinates' job expectancies, in cases where subordinates were highly stressed. This result goes in line with the path-goal theory, which states that when subordinates without much knowledge of their work are more motivated when they work with a directive leader who clarifies the role and provides guidance to the subordinates and supportive leader who shows considerate behaviour and reduces the uncertainties of work environment.

Results Not Supporting Path-goal Theory

High participative leadership had a negative effect on subordinates' acceptance of the leader and job satisfaction when they prefer autonomy and self-control. Conversely high directive leadership had a positive effect on the same subordinates' job expectancies. High participative leadership has a negative effect on job satisfaction (being not satisfied with supervision, co-workers and the job in general). The results revealed in general that participative leadership had inverse relationship with subordinates' acceptance of the leader and job satisfaction in cases where subordinates have high perception about their ability. Subordinates were more motivated when they have high perception about their ability and work with a directive leader.

High achievement-oriented leadership had an inverse relationship with acceptance of the leader when subordinates need for achievement was high. Subordinates working under supportive leadership have inverse relationship with acceptance of leader when the task is structured. This result is contrary to path-goal theory because theory states that when the task is highly structured supportive leadership makes the work tolerable and pleasant and people are more comfortable with supportive leader. Subordinates working under high directive and participative leadership have a positive relationship

with job expectancies and were more motivated when the task is structured. This result contradicts path-goal theory which states that when the task is highly structured a non-directive leadership behaviour motivates the subordinate to increased performance. It also states that participative leadership has inverse relationship with the motivation of subordinates when the task is structured. High supportive leadership had a negative relationship with job satisfaction. This finding is contrary to the path-goal theory that subordinates are more satisfied with a supportive leader in a structured task. High directive leadership had inverse relationship with acceptance of leader when subordinates were highly stressed. This result did not confirm path-goal prediction that when subordinates were highly stressed they accept directive leader because role-clarifying behaviour reduces subordinates stress. Stressed subordinates are satisfied by little.

It would seem that high participative leaders can be deemed as interfering, and directive leaders are welcomed if they make the job's parameters clear and reduce uncertainty and ambiguity. Over-supportive leaders can take the challenge out of the job, and there can be conflicts between the aspirations of leaders and subordinates – their hoped-for achievements might clash. Structuring work tasks generally aid job expectancy but too much interference can be demotivating.

Implications of Findings for Path-Goal Theory

The findings from this study concluded that there were many significant relationships among the four leader behaviours through the six moderating variables to the nine dependent variables but all results were not according to the prediction of path-goal theory.

Need for Achievement

The results of this study made it clear that high achievement-oriented leadership had a positive effect on subordinates' job expectancies and job satisfaction, where subordinates have a high need for achievement. This finding has important implications because staff who wish to achieve and advance (as opposed to those who do not have high need for achievement) need to be encouraged to grow. High directive leadership had inverse relationship with acceptance of the leader when subordinates need for achievement was high. This result also confirmed the path-goal prediction that subordinates did not accept directive leader when their need for achievement was high. High participative leadership had positive effect on subordinates' job expectancies. This result was also consistent with path-goal theory, which states that people who have high need for achievement are more motivated when their leader's behaviour is participative because of being involved in decision making. Supportive leadership had positive relationship with job satisfaction when the subordinates had low need for

achievement. This finding confirmed path-goal theory, that subordinates having a low need for achievement are satisfied with supportive leader. These findings are in agreement with Dessler (1973), Algattan (1983), Indvik (1985). The findings did not support path-goal predictions on relationships between achievement-oriented leadership and acceptance of the leader, when examined through the moderating variable *subordinates' need for achievement*.

Need for Autonomy

In the situation where subordinates have a high need for autonomy, participation in decision making will tend to increase the intrinsic valence of the work for these subordinates, resulting in greater effort and higher satisfaction (Yukl, 1989). Directive leader behaviour is resisted by subordinates who have high need for self-control. This study provide confirmation that subjects with high need for independence had high means on the *acceptance of leader* scale when their leaders were 'low directive'. But this was not true for job expectancies and satisfaction. Participative leadership was positively effecting job expectancies of subordinates who prefer autonomy and self-control. This result is consistent with path-goal theory.

The findings did not support path-goal predictions on relationships of participative leadership with acceptance of the leader and job in general and directive leadership with subordinates' job expectancies when examined through the moderating variable *need for independence*.

Locus of Control

According to House & Mitchell (1974) path-goal theory asserts that the subordinate's internal-external score on a measure called locus of control moderates the relationship between participative leadership style and subordinate satisfaction. Mitchell's (1974) findings (cited in House & Mitchell 1974) suggest that 'internals' were more satisfied with a participative and achievement-oriented leadership style and 'externals' were more satisfied with a directive style. This study supports Mitchell's (1974) findings. According to the findings of this study, 'externals' had greater acceptance of the directive leader, and high participative leadership had positive effect on subordinates' job expectancies who had internal locus of control. These results confirm path-goal prediction, which states that internals always prefer participative leader, and externals prefer directive leader. High directive leadership contributed negatively in job satisfaction with supervision and job in general. This finding confirms the path-goal theory that directive leadership has positive relationship with satisfaction when the subordinates have external locus of control and has negative

relationship with satisfaction when the subordinates have internal locus of control. The above findings support Algattan (1983), Leonard (1992), and Oppenheimer (1981).

Perception about Abilities

Path-goal theory hypothesize that the perception of the subordinate of his or her own ability to accomplish an assigned task is very important because a subordinate with high ability perception will prefer participative and achievement-oriented leader, and a subordinate with low perception about his abilities will feel more satisfied under the supervision of directive leader. The findings of this study revealed that directive leadership had inverse relationship with subordinates' acceptance of the leader, and contributed negatively in job satisfaction with supervision and job in general when they have high perception about their ability. This results confirms path-goal prediction that the higher the degree of perceived ability, the less the subordinate will view the leader directing behaviour as acceptable and satisfying. Subordinates with a high perception about their ability were more motivated when working with participative leaders. This result confirms path-goal prediction that subordinates with greater perceived ability are more motivated with participative leaders.

The results were not consistent with path-goal theory regarding participative leadership, job satisfaction and acceptance of leader. Directive leadership had positive effect on subordinates' job expectancies: the path-goal theory conversely states that people with high need for autonomy and self-control do not prefer directive leaders.

Task Structure

Task structure has been one of the most widely examined path-goal variables examined in research. In path-goal theory it is assumed that highly structured tasks are assumed to be less satisfying than unstructured tasks. This study confirms this assumption because task structure was negatively related to acceptance of leader and job satisfaction. This finding is in line with the Indvik (1985) study who concluded that leader behaviour had a certain effect on job satisfaction when task structure is considered as a moderating variable. It is predicted in path-goal theory that the impact of directive leader behaviour will have a negative effect on subordinate's job satisfaction when the task is dissatisfying, routine, or structured. This prediction is also confirmed in this study as there was inverse relationship between directive leader behaviour and task structure, and also was inverse relationship between task structure and acceptance of leader and job satisfaction. High directive leadership contributed negatively in job satisfaction in terms of supervision, co-worker and job in general when the task was structured. This finding confirms the path-goal theory that

subordinates are more satisfied with directive and participative leaders in an unstructured task. In path- goal theory, it is predicted that since the purpose of directive leader behaviour is to provide task information and role clarity, it will have a positive effect on subordinates' expectancies, job satisfaction and performance when the task is complex, ambiguous and varied (House, 1971). Therefore, there would be a negative correlation with subordinates' job expectancies, job satisfaction and acceptance of leader, where staff are engaged in clear tasks for directive leaders. Several other studies have supported this theory (House and Mitchell, 1974; House and Dessler, 1974; Szilagyi and Simms, 1975).

According to path-goal theory, supportive leader behaviour will have positive effect on subordinate satisfaction for subordinates who work on highly structured tasks and will have little effect on job satisfaction or performance when task structure is low (House and Mitchell, 1974). This reveals that people are more satisfied when leaders are high supportive with a structured task. This result confirms the path-goal theory that when subordinates have a task that is structured or routine a supportive and considerate leader motivates a subordinate by minimizing the negative aspects of the work environment. Path-goal theory hypothesizes that participative leader behaviour will have a positive impact on subordinate outcomes when the task is unstructured, varied or complex. Our results showed that the high participative leadership contributed negatively in job satisfaction with supervision, co-worker and job in general when the task was structured. All above results confirm the findings of Dessler (1973), House and Mitchell (1974), House and Dessler (1974), Szilagyi and Simms (1975) and Indvik (1985).

This study did not support a relationship between supportive leader behaviour, acceptance of leader and job satisfaction. It was concluded that subjects working under supportive leadership had inverse relationship with acceptance of leader and job satisfaction when the task was structured – contrary to path-goal theory which states that when the task is highly structured supportive leadership makes the work tolerable and pleasant and people are more comfortable with supportive leader. It was concluded that subjects working under high directive and participative leadership have positive relationship with job expectancies and were more motivated, when the task is structured. This result is contradictory to path-goal theory, because theory states that when the task is highly structured a non-directive leadership behaviour motivates the subordinate to increased performance. It also states that participative leadership positive affects the motivation of subordinates when the task is unstructured. Other researchers (Oppenheimer, 1981; Wolcott, 1984) have reported the findings contradictory to path-goal theory and our result evidence supports them

Stress

It was hypothesized that highly stressed people will be more satisfied with supportive leader as this behaviour can help in reducing the level of stress, clarifies roles and responsibilities and help people done their work smoothly. Path-goal theory asserts that when tasks or work environment are dangerous, monotonous, stressful or frustrating, supportive leader behaviour will lead to increase subordinate effort and satisfaction by enhancing relationships and self confidence, lowering stress and anxiety and compensating for unpleasant aspects of the work (House, 1996). The findings of this study made clear that stress had an inverse relationship with job satisfaction and acceptance of leader, and that highly stressed people had greater acceptance scores when their leaders were directive and/or supportive. This result is consistent with path-goal theory, that when subordinates were highly stressed they were more motivated when they work with directive leader who clarifies the role and provides guidance and supportive leader who shows considerate behaviour and reduces the uncertainties of work environment. But when subordinates were highly stressed, high directive leadership had inverse relationship with acceptance of leader, contrary to the expectations path-goal predictions which appears to work only within moderate limits.

Implications of Findings for Educational Administrators

The style a leader uses needs to depend on the situation. Leaders must be flexible to staff strengths and needs. Subordinates without confidence in their ability to do the job may need support, whereas those with high ability need delegated responsibilities and challenging goals. If subordinates are unclear, structure and direction are needed especially when conditions are unstructured. Leaders however should avoid direction in a structured situation, as this seems patronising. Supportive leadership will be most effective when the task is relatively routine and simple. With participative leadership, people are motivated by being consulted on action and activities affecting them. Most staff have basic competence and the right kind of participation yields both motivation and knowledge valuable for the solution of the problem and for acceptance. Above all, it gives people a sense of accomplishment. In the situation where subordinates have a high need for autonomy and achievement, participation in decision making tend to increase the intrinsic valence of the work for these subordinates, resulting in greater effort and higher satisfaction. In the situation where subordinates have internal locus of control they would be more satisfied with a participative leader but with external locus of control they value a directive style.

College Principals' who perceive their role as leader of equals instead of as the top of the hierarchy, can provide the kind of leadership that will

inspire his colleagues to believe in their work, and feel ownership. This will ultimately enhance the quality of educational provision. Professional training for Principals is important. There is no current provision for Principals in Punjab. A flexible use of path-goal motivational theory would strengthen such training.

Our next step is to use qualitative methods such as narrative biographical life story method (Bertaux, 1981; Czarniawska, 1998; Boje, 2001), and ethnography using interview and observations to give flesh to staff reactions to leadership behaviour. As Silverman (2001) suggests “that a dependence on purely quantitative methods may neglect the social and cultural construction of the variable ... (as) attitude do not simply attach to the inside of peoples’ heads and researching them depends on making a whole series of analytical assumptions”. Path-goal theory is a complex of many variables and quantitative methods alone will not suffice if we are to build up a complex understanding of leadership behaviour.

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