
Educational Leadership as Emerging from the Interpretation of Autobiography of Dr. Verghese Kurien

Dr. DEEPALEE A. MAHIDA

Assistant Professor

M.B. Patel College of Education

Vallabh Vidhyanagar, Gujarat, India

Abstract:

Leadership is a topic with universal appeal and in the academic research literature much has been written about leadership. Despite the abundance of writing on the topic, leadership has presented a major challenge to practitioners and researchers interested in understanding the nature of leadership. Leadership scholars seeking to answer questions about culture and meaning have found experimental and quantitative methods to be insufficient on their own in explaining the phenomena they wish to study. As a result, qualitative research has gained momentum as a mode of inquiry. Autobiographical approaches deal with stories of lives with an aim to expand understanding about aspects of the social world. Autobiography gives a researcher an opportunity to see description of social situations made by a narrator and his/her attitudes and action in these situations. Moreover autobiographies elucidate the participation of an individual in social processes as they develop over time. The life events presented in autobiographical story are naturally connected and associated with one another. The present paper aims at arriving the concept of educational leadership by analyzing the book I too had a dream, an autobiography of Dr.Verghese Kurien, the milkman of India. The present paper portrays the leadership style of Dr. Kurien and derives educational implications of his leadership style.

Key words: Educational Leadership, Life events, Culture, Social Process, Autobiographical Studies

1.0 Introduction

The extremely complex world of today necessitates a wide variety of leaders. We need leaders of different types for various walks of life. More than ever, in today's climate of heightened expectations, leaders are in the hot seat to enrich the system in which they are placed. Especially, leaders in the educational set up need to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community-builders, public relation experts, budget analysts, facility managers and special program administrators.

The task of education is to prepare leaders of various kinds for varied purposes and spheres of life. A truly educated person is a leader in himself / herself. In other words, to educate means to lead out, to empower. Leadership, in other words, is an intersection of education and working with people. Again the questions that arise here are: What should be the content, method and tools of education for leaders? Can leaders be prepared/ developed? How can a system of education develop leaders from masses that enter into it?

Most of leadership theories are abstract, speculative and theoretical. Theories about leadership cannot turn people into leaders because human beings learn from others' experiences or experiences of their own. Our tendency to train leaders through textbooks in 'Organizational Behaviour', 'Organizational Development' and 'Organizational Culture' is just out of place and irrelevant. Now we are required to read leaders as the content of education for leadership. The objective of studying lives of such leaders is to explore unknown facets of leaders' lives as there exist a wealth of source material for mining.

Over recent years, biographical studies have achieved an increasingly important place in academic study. The two are

intermingled. Education uses an auto/biography as a teaching tool and in an auto/biography education features strongly as a formative stage in personal development. Auto/biographical studies seek to expand the understanding of lives in educational contexts.

2.0 Rationale

Auto/biography offers something valuable to the educational set up. The study of leadership through auto/biography is slowly gaining ground among researchers in educational set up. Auto/biography is one form of life writing. By considering auto/biographies as case studies, it is possible to link theory and practice and to test and evaluate theories. Auto/biographies (case studies) emphasizing the importance of context be it historical, institutional and cultural is a strength when it comes to understanding what leaders do and why they do so in a particular setting. Especially when their organizations are confronted by challenging situations, how they interact with people and thereby enrich themselves. Furthermore, useful lessons can be learned by studying the auto/biographies of acknowledged leaders, by looking at their personal qualities their methods, their success and their failures.

3.0 Explanation of the terms

a. *Educational Leadership*

For the present study the concept of leadership will be taken as

1. Leaders' behavioural patterns
2. Leaders' attributes
3. Leaders' ways of learning

For the present study, certain principles and procedures for leadership in education will be derived on the basis of leadership acumen of selected leaders.

b. *Emerging*

- To come into view
- To come into existence
- To come to maturity
- To come forth from that in which anything has been enveloped, or concealed

In the present study , leadership development of selected leaders is studied as reflected in/emerging from their auto/biographies.

c. *Interpretation*

In the present study, interpretation of auto/biographies of selected leaders under study is derived. The present study tries to derive how the leaders' leadership acumen develop as mentioned in their auto / biographies.

d. *Autobiography and Biography*

As a literary genre, autobiography narrating the story of one's own life, is a variation of biography, a form of writing that describes the life of a particular individual. For the present study autobiography of Dr.verghses kurien titled as I TOO HAD A DREAM is studied.

4.0 Research Questions

1. The researcher focused on the following questions to be answered through a careful study.
2. How do the life experiences of individuals help them to emerge as competent and exemplary leaders?
3. What is the role of the family, school and reference group in evolution of prospective leaders?
4. What is the role of education and training in the development of leadership behaviour?
5. What are core incidents of leaders' lives which raise leadership issues?

6. What are social and personal values possessed by the leaders?
7. How do leaders deal with a number of paradoxes arising in the organisation such as paradoxes of change and stability, control and delegation of decision power?
8. What is educational leadership?

5.0 Research Objectives

1. To study life happenings, situations, interactions and social relations of the selected leader
2. To examine the role played by the family and school in development of leadership
3. To identify factors responsible for leadership development
4. To derive leadership patterns and styles and draw their educational implications
5. To ascertain educational value of the processes contributing to leadership
6. To define leadership in an educational perspective
7. To offer recommendations for leadership at various levels of educational set up.

6.0 Delimiting the Study

1. For the present study, the English version of auto / biographies of selected leaders are the source of the data.
2. Life stories of the selected leaders are studied. Special emphasis is placed on the study of development of leadership and its educational implications.
3. The study includes qualitative classification and interpretation of the data gathered. No statistical analysis forms a part of the study.

7.0 Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

The selected auto/biographies were read intensively for deriving the major events leading to leadership development. The study included two fold analysis (1) Event analysis and (2) Idea analysis. Educational Implications have been arrived at based on this analysis.

Context Analysis Design for the Present Study

For deriving leadership qualities from the auto/biographies of selected leaders, the researcher adopted the above quoted Content Analysis Method. Categorising and evaluation of the textual and contextual data through consideration of certain rules are devised in this model.

The steps of this model are as follows:

Understanding the Theories of Leadership

Primary Reading of the Text

Selecting the Content Categories

Determining the Form of Idea Units

Deriving Key Words

Consulting Reference Material

Writing Interpretations and Inferences

7.1 Sample of Event Analysis

- ▶ **Event : Kurien's confrontation with the self for selecting the career path.**

After completing his studies of engineering, he joined Tata Iron & Steel Company (TISCO) as a graduate apprentice. His selection was considered a very prestigious selection then because the company looks only "a class apprentice". But he was not satisfied with the present job. He wanted to pursue higher studies abroad and get a master's degree in metallurgy and physics. Meanwhile he was one of the lucky ones to get a call for an interview for scholarship of dairy

engineering. He got the scholarship to go to the US and qualify as a dairy engineer for the Government of India's Ministry of Agriculture. His involvement with dairy engineering was a twist of fate otherwise he would normally have pursued a career in science. During his studies in the US in collaboration with his profession, he made colloidal iron where the carbon is round in shape and not in flakes. He received a Master's degree in metallurgy and nuclear physics. He also did some token courses in engineering.

- ▶ **Situation** : Studies of Dairy Engineering
- ▶ **words showing emergence of leadership qualities** : I do believe, I made up my mind.
- ▶ **Association with leadership theory**

It can be associated with trait theory of leadership wherein traits like readiness, innovativeness, persistence are emphasized. To describe leadership as a trait is quite different from describing it as a process. The trait view point conceptualizes leadership as a property or a set of properties possessed in varying degrees by different people. Here APJ Abdul Kalam has exhibited traits like ambition, aspiration, hard work, determination and creating a vision.

Educational Implications

Eager young minds should be made aware of the possibilities and alternatives that lie before them. They should be made aware of a sense of their worth. To succeed in life and achieve results one must understand and master three mighty forces – desire, belief and expectations

From the text such main 11 events were identified and analysed.

7.2 A Sample of Idea Analysis

No.	Statement/Event	Key Words
1	I will not do it. I am here only to build co-operative dairies, not anybody's private dairy. (ITHD-165)	I will not, build Co-operatives
2	I believed myself to be a part of a mission (ITHD-82)	myself, part of a mission
3	There are moments in life when it becomes imperative to protect one's stand (ITHD-55)	Imperative, Protect one's stand

- ▶ A careful study of statements 1,2 and 3 shows that Dr. Varghese Kurien has the staunch belief in certain core values. He has inculcated these values in his personal life as well. For him, personal integrity means being honest to one's self and if one is honest to one's self, he doesn't require much effort in being honest with others.

Educational Implications

It took a lot of resolve, determination and faith to keep going in the face of incredible difficulties and challenges. When one takes up a big challenge or commit to any cause, one often runs into controversy and conflict. Only a person with integrity can face such situation.

8.0 Major Findings

- Some major components of effective leadership are conviction, readiness to learn, innovativeness, going beyond/opposed to minimalist approach, accepting challenges, integrity, being honest, and assertiveness, raising voice against injustice and fighting for the social cause.
- Taking initiative and exploring various possibilities lead to new inventions.

- Thinking innovatively and questioning the established patterns having certain limitations definitely open new fields of learning and experiments.
- The family and school backdrop play an influential role in shaping a person.
- In situations of crisis and conflicts, the leader resolves the way forward.
- Authentic leadership rests heavily on the self-relevant meaning the leader attaches to his or her life experiences and these meanings are captured in a leader's life-story.
- Effective leaders nurture aspirations and ambitions that go beyond personal gains and into societal well-being.

9.0 Discussion on Findings

1. There are several important lessons learnt from the leader under study. The patience and determination, coupled with important strategy planning helped their entire efforts.
2. Democratic leadership is an admirable phenomenon and a process as exhibited by Dr. Kurien but it cannot be the panacea for all institutions. In the interest of the institution, it may sometimes be necessary to adopt a harsh and directorial style of leadership.
3. There are several factors that shaped leadership style of leader under study. They were congenial environment in early childhood, nurturance in a joint family, role models among elders. Other influences were from their working life and experience. As lifelong learners, they made the best use of the opportunities that they had encountered.
4. Getting involved with all in the organization in their personal well-being, to be with them in their happiness and sorrows with an open heart, a deep involvement not

at a strategic level but at emotional level helped these leaders in building teams.

5. Absolute transparency is deeply rooted in institution building so that people do not suspect or look for a hidden agenda. Failure in this aspect seriously erodes the credibility of the leader. And once the credibility is lost, the institution collapses like a pack of cards.
6. In any institution there are a handful of good and sincere workers, there are some shirkers, and some fence sitters on the watch out for the way the wind blows. Everyone should be included in the task rather than a few who produce and form the coterie, giving at the same time due and proportionate regard to the contribution of each.
7. Through the turbulence of generation of natural and manmade disasters, wars, social and financial upheavals these four leaders have emerged to give hope and direction to society. These individuals come from diverse, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and possess unique leadership style and characteristics, yet all personify the common thread of passion and ability to inspire others to action.
8. Although much of the research and data presented and analyzed in this study focus on the magnitude of the influence and positive social outcomes accomplished by them, it all comes back to seeing and viewing each of these giants of faith as simple individuals.
9. Specific examples of traits displayed by these leaders are having foresight/ planning ahead, dynamic, encouraging, positive outlook, confidence builder, trust worthy, just, motivational, honest, informed, communicative, win-win problem solver, co-coordinator and a team builder, going beyond personal gains, readiness for sacrifice, inclusive attitude/openness and passion for life.

Educational Leadership

The purpose of this section is to describe the conceptual landscape of educational leadership. Through the use of various forms of life writing, i.e. auto/biographies, an attempt is made to understand the context in which the leader was working. Apart from this, an attempt is made to describe findings derived from the interaction among all of the various personality factors at work within that context, such as the leaders world view and working style as s/he functions within a climate of expectations.

Educational leaders, being institution builders, inspire. They generate a band of inspired persons. An inspired person is self-propelled, does not wait for others to lead; s/he leads herself/himself. S/he generates her/his own work within the parameters of organizational goals and perspectives, has a personal style of the acquiring the targets. Such individuals are committed to a mission that they have accepted.

Academic institutions are knowledge enterprises. Closely related to excellence in teaching- learning processes is the academic excellence indicated either by scholarship or learning skill and attitude towards learning, which are added positive features. Since learning is the central theme of academic institutions, Educational leadership creates as well as provides a conducive climate for learning.

The world is moving away from top down hierarchical governance to horizontal spread of power. So, too, must educational leadership evolve from domination to stewardship, from control to consensus. Educational leadership in the present era witnesses the following orbital shift.

Educational Leadership : An Orbital Shift

	FROM (Status Quo Today)		TO (Need For)
1.	Hierarchical	1.	Participative
2.	Mandated procedures: Extrinsic control	2.	Teams & departments: self control
3.	I-centric	3.	We-centric

4.	Withholding	4.	Sharing
5.	Resistance to change	5.	Stay on top of change
6.	Low risk-taking	6.	High risk-taking, creativity, challenge
7.	Maintain status-quo ,don't rock the boat, 'Who Moved my cheese'	7.	Continual Improvement and Innovations, 'I Moved my cheese'
8.	'Not Invented Here' syndrome, Does not work here	8.	Build scenarios Let's try attitude

To sum up, educational leadership is the synergy of creative and positive energies of its constituents, people and the processes.

Certain recommendations for education practitioners and stakeholders have been made on the basis of the implications and findings that emerged out from the study.

10.0 Recommendations

- **for teachers**
- **for heads of institutions**
- **for parents**
- **for text-book writers**

11.0 Suggestions for further studies:

- Preparation and Try out of a learning package for developing leadership acumen among pre-service students.
- Educational Insights as derived from the selected stories of Panchtantra
- Strategic planning for educational practitioner derived from the One Minute Series
- Learning in Education from some selected works and Films on management.
- Building a feministic perspective of educational management from One Minute Series.

REFERENCES

- D.B. Van Dalen, *Understanding Educational Research* (New York: Mc Graw Hill Book Co., 1979)
- R.P.Pathak, *Methodology of Educational Research*, (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2008)
- Borg and Gall, *Educational Research: An introduction* (New York: Longman, 1979)
- Fenwick W. English and John Hill, *Total Quality Education: Transforming Schools into Learning Places* (California: Sage Publications, 1994)
- Sagor R. and Bruce Barnett, *The TQE Principal: A Transformed Leader* (California: Sage Publications, 1994)
- Blanchard Kenneth and Patricia Zigrami, *Leadership and the one Minute Manager*, (New Delhi: Hyper Collins Publishers, 1992)
- Anjali Ghanekar, *Organizational Behavior: Concepts and cases*, (Pune. Everest Publishing House, 1995)
- Ludin C. Stephen and Paul, Harry, *Fish*, (Hachette UK: Hyperion Publishers, 2000)
- Gupta Ishan and Rajat Khare, *Make the Move: Demystifying Entrepreneurship*, (New Delhi, Pustak Mahal Publishers, 2006)
- Chaudhari Arindam, *Count your Chickens before they hatch* (New Delhi, Vikas publications, 2001)
- L. G. Bolman and T. E. Deal. "Leading and managing: Effects of context, culture, and gender." *Educational Administration Quarterly* 28(3) (1992): 314-329.
- P. Gronn and P. Ribbins, "Leaders in Context: Postpositivist Approaches to Understanding Educational Leadership." *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 32(3) (1996): 466.