

## **EXPLORING LEADERSHIP DILEMMA FOR FACULTY: A CASE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN PAKISTAN**

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**Abstract:** *Effective leadership in academia is crucial as well as an important component for the success of higher education institution sand to produce graduates of the twenty-first century. However, the complexity of educational reforms, multiple goals, and traditional norms stimulate vague and contested leadership amongst faculty members. The paper reveals the significance of faculty leadership for higher education institutions and explores how leadership abilities can be indoctrinated at the faculty level. For this purpose; a qualitative study was designed by arranging a series of focus group discussions to collect the data. By conducting thematic analysis; few themes emerged which enlightens the significance of academic leadership. Findings revealed that academicians performing multiple roles ranges from institutional teaching to faculty administration by exhibiting themselves as core human resource which is contributing simultaneously to students learning as well accomplishing the institutional vision. Lastly, the paper presents the art of practicing situational leadership in educational reforms considering different paradigms of leadership.*

**Keywords:** *Leadership, Faculty, Higher Education Institutions, Higher Education Commission*

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## **Introduction**

With the evolving trends; when it comes to the future of universities globally, the leaders of higher educational institutes are all well aware that it's not just domestic trends that influence their way of operations, there are external factors as well that could have triggered the education sector (Majeed, et al., 2017; Shouse & Ma, 2015). In an academic context, differential leadership styles and roles are being adopted by academicians to draw a framework for how leadership abilities should be practiced (Karadag, 2020). The higher educational institutes in Pakistan and probably in other developing countries, studies advocate that educational institutes continued to be transformed from elite to a mass university system. Such transformation of universities has brought about students seeking admission are less numerate, proficient, and knowledgeable while simultaneously, students are driven by education costs, considering themselves to be clients of higher education, carrying with them increased desires for decision and nurture learning (Halsey, 1993; Hayward). The progressively changing systems of universities urging students to put in hard efforts and be inclined to seek higher education to meet their educational needs and goals (Karadag, 2020; Pate, Smith, Caldwell,

Horace, & Zagar, 2018). Such noteworthy changes within educational reforms carry with them the uplifted requirement of active leadership explicitly for academicians working on leadership positions.

The educational administrators having an extraordinary and powerful job of managing as well as teaching. Globally, the academic leader carries a dual burden of managing administrative tasks and working on leadership positions while confronting challenges of changing environment (McKimm & Swanwick, 2010; Swanwick & McKimm, 2014). Performing diverse roles for the academicians is emerged out of the unique positions which serve as an interface amongst the educational reforms and the teaching environment. Achieving excellence in such circumstances calls to guarantee institutional management while executing a successful educational plan. For this particular purpose, universities must implement and execute the policies and initiatives taken by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Pakistan to produce graduates of the twenty-first century. Accomplishing this task will require the acquisition of refined programming; and integration of essential policies into the institution's educational plan through the creative minds of educational leaders which

include Vice-Chancellors, University Rectors, Deans, Program Directors, and Faculty members. Such energetic administration of educational institutes plans and executes the educational programs and, critically decipher the planned university approach into an interactive learning experience for students. Practicing leadership at different university positions stimulates academicians to learn leadership abilities for a deeper understanding of their respective leadership roles which subsequently brought excellence in working (McClure & Teitelbaum, 2016).

Effective leadership in faculty is crucial as well as an important component for the success of HEIs (Kim & Lee, 2019; Milburn, 2010). However, the complexity of educational reforms, multiple goals, and traditional norms stimulate vague and contested leadership amongst faculty members. In higher education institutions; faculty members directly promote the institutional teaching mission, advance learning, and research by representing themselves as core human resources of higher education institutions. Though the faculty role has been evolved over the period, the leadership skills of faculty have remained critical to innovative teaching methodologies and to revamp educational policies and procedures (Vilkinas & Ladyshevsky, 2012). Research witnessed that

leadership roles in educational reforms are being contested and threatened by the progressing transformation of educational reforms (Abramovich & Miedijensky, 2019; Majeed, Jamshed, Nazri, & Mustamil, 2019). The increasing trend of part-time and non-tenure educational appointments tends to emerge quality of education, standards for educational standards and promotions, increased administrative responsibilities lead to academic capitalism (Gehrke & Kezar, 2015). Such issues serve as a barrier for faculty leadership as they brought challenges for the faculty members to meet the multiple needs while performing on a single designation.

The ever-growing tensions postured by the demand of unstable economic conditions and the need for creative leadership simultaneously direct faculty members towards academic capitalism. Academic capitalism provides supports to the academicians by earning additional income to serve as adjunct faculty members in different educational institutions at one time, by winning research grants which may compromise the leadership standards (Croucher & Lacy, 2020; McClure & Teitelbaum, 2016). The prevalence of academic prevalence is progressing in all areas of education and research. The academicians are progressively engaged in numerous activities beyond the boundaries of their educational reforms

(Pate et al., 2018). Hence university leaders in Pakistan are experiencing increased pressures from external and internal regulatory bodies to meet the fluctuating demands and expectations. Moreover, the perception that leadership jobs in educational setup are becoming difficult and the current academic leaders are adding and it is unpredictable that enough leaders would be available to take on this challenging position. In such circumstances, higher education should seriously think to prepare leaders. Research exists which articulates the formal career progression and the roles and tasks of academic leaders but nominal efforts are being put to furnish the developmental experiences which ultimately prepare faculty for leadership roles (Abramovich & Miedijensky, 2019; Sayabek et al., 2018). Hence, in response to the noted calls, this research study bridges the existing research gaps by exploring numerous leadership roles performed by the faculty members and capturing perceptions of faculty members about the importance of leadership and consequently facing the challenges while meeting expectations of faculty leadership.

### **Instilling Leadership In Faculty**

The philosophical stance of leadership has varied paradigms for academic administrators and faculty members (Balwant, 2016; Jacobs, Gordon, &

Solis, 2016). Instilling leadership ability amongst faculty is of the central premise to tackle the complexities of higher education reforms which requires strong leadership abilities according to the diverse situations. Employee's commitment to the institution and reduction of attrition rate are the factors that can be influenced by an effective leadership style (Majeed, et al., 2020). Leadership for faculty is hard-won as the phenomena are challenged to meet the requirements of diverse stakeholders such as higher education commission, regulatory bodies, accreditation agencies, industry requirements, student population, other academic as well as non-academic staff (Braun, Peus, Frey, & Knipfer, 2016). Thus faculty practicing leadership abilities could be recognized as a unique factor for the higher education institutes. Furthermore, the paradigm of faculty leadership goes beyond the instructional setup which does not require formal leadership positions.

The knowledge-intensive educational reforms offer chronic leadership challenges and opportunities which eventually stimulate faculty members to learn leadership skills. The context of HEI's is influenced by numerous competitive pressures and a shortage of resources (Braun et al., 2016). The changing factors include changes in student dynamics (Adams, 2018); massive use of technology (Hunzicker,

2017); introduction of outcome-based education (Margolis & Huggins, 2012); and the opening of the black box containing the gaps of the academic and corporate sector. In response to all such challenges and take advantage of opportunities it's important to develop leadership abilities.

Faculty leaders can serve as a lens through which any administrative and students centered challenge can turn into an opportunity. Leadership, especially for faculty, possess the ability to manifest their authority for making remarkable changes in students, society, and groups. In the contemporary era, the research on faculty leadership has brought forth new possibilities of transforming students and societies. As faculty members are not restricted to teaching; they play a significant impact on the ethics of academia, academic freedom, and educational integrity which may vary according to the educational context. The fastest-growing leading universities of the world have to overcome infrastructure barriers, meeting multiple deadlines, display educational norms, and values. Specifically, HEI's plays a significant role in shaping the quality of education and ensuring the leadership attributes amongst the students. These institutions and faculty members are not only producing the graduates of the twenty-first century rather responsible to produce government leaders, business

leaders, entrepreneurs, academic leaders, and other related professions while performing their duties as curriculum developers and executors. Hence faculty leadership is inducing the outcomes of education reforms via two streams. One stream is to satisfy the administrative requirements. And second streams flow around motivating students towards education by employing diversified educational teaching pedagogies.

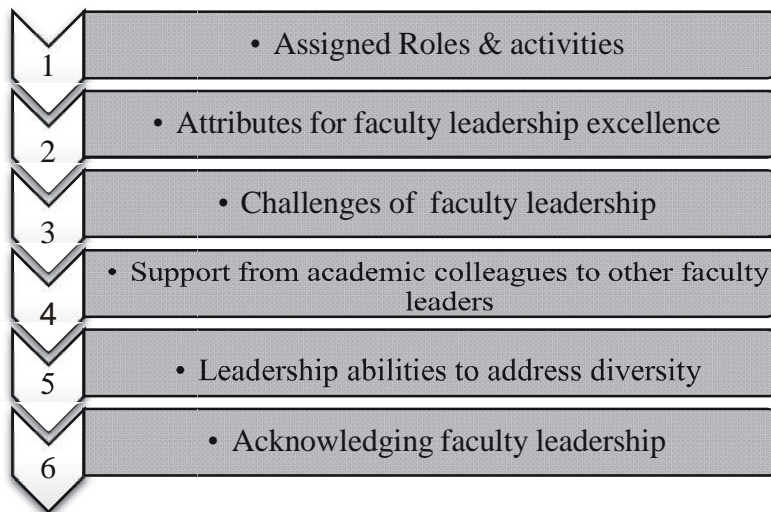
Higher education institutions have been referred to as "herding cats," but the ultimate strength of the university system rests in the critical reasoning, imagination, and academic freedom of the faculty serving in them (Bhattacharyya, 2019). The common ideals of intellectual independence and autonomy, political engagement, and the diversity of academic preferences are explicitly at odds with unilateral top-down leadership. According to Jacobs et al. (2016); "Faculty leadership is referred to a wide variety of tasks at multiple levels in educational reforms, which includes working with students, fellow faculty members, institution administration, and work that is focussed on educational, professional and organizational development". Nevertheless, the faculty leadership has got significant attention from the educational researchers outlining the multiple hidden agendas and the kind of leadership need; the question arises

which particular qualities and specific style are required for an individual associated as a faculty member of HEI's. For decades management scholars have explored the best leadership style. But we could not find the best leadership style. Hence the specific leadership style required for the faculty members is deep-rooted in the university philosophy, cultural values, norms, academic freedom, and situational interests.

Research evidence suggests that a charismatic or transformative leadership style can be more effective in an educational setting (Majeed et al., 2017). Similarly, the model of

situational leadership shed light on four distinct types of teaching beyond traditional ones in an instructional environment. Each style is attributed to a particular circumstance that represents the students' interest and level of maturity. The four types of situational leadership allow teachers the freedom of follow all of the styles for a given circumstance (Tucker & Au, 2016). Finally, the paradigm promotes the leadership of educational institutions by implementing a student-centered educational approach to create a balance between the goals of the program, teaching methodologies, and the level of maturity of the students (Ali, 2017).

**Figure No :1**



The leadership style of the faculty member is necessary for achieving personal teaching and research potential; for promoting the purpose of universities and colleges; and for acting

as role models. A teacher's position as a leader is to set success standards and improve teaching strategies, taking into account the final objective of the educational institution (Adams, A.

Samat & Abu Samah 2018). In various areas, leadership by faculty members has been tested. Business skills (e.g. management of staff, material and financial capital to meet business objectives), social skills (e.g. communication and capacity to understand and adapt), and behavioral skills (e.g. communicating with and affecting others) were listed as the top leadership skills expected by faculty members in business management (Traynor, Borgelt, Rodriguez, Ross, & Schwinghammer, 2018). Hence, the faculty leadership activities could be synthesized and encouraged by exercising the following:

The above-mentioned activities may not be generalized to all faculty, but rather provide benchmarks that could be employed for comparison by conducting future research studies. And these findings could be evaluated as if they are transferable to different educational and instructional contexts (Jacobs et al., 2016). The leadership attributes are vital for the success of faculty as they are in a distinctive position to understand their diverse knowledge in combination with their relationship with other faculty members (Margolis & Huggins, 2012).

The significance of a good leadership competencies club with positive human values supersedes all forms of troubles and trials, should faculty aspire in attaining educational excellence in academic as well as extracurricular

activities. In such ambitious educational institutions, the challenges in attaining the said status are the collective effort of leadership ability and commitment from all sources enabling excellence in academia. A future study could be carried out to investigate the clarification and application of different styles of leadership that could contribute to ensuring the adoption of honesty in the education sector. For the new as well as current faculty, universities should envision the horizons of leadership. Consequently, each faculty member can have opportunities in several contexts to practice informal leadership. The future academic performance revolves around the university rectors, formal faculty members, and other support staff by practicing synergistic leadership activities.

### **Methodology**

The current research paper is based on a qualitative research paradigm as the research is exploratory. The focus group discussions were used to collect the data from the leaders, Deans, Rectors, academicians, management staff of the higher education institutions of Pakistan. The series of focus group discussions were the part of the second annual Rectors' Conference 2019 which was held in the Governor House, Lahore, Pakistan on the topic of "Transforming Higher Education Institutes to produce twenty-first-century graduates", organized by

Superior University. The conference aims to make a blueprint that identifies the current methods of higher education institutes and compares them with the ideal education systems that inculcate all values of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century graduate into their students. To achieve this, the agenda of the conference is divided into the following seven working groups (1) Institutional Governance; (2) Skill-based Curriculum Development; (3) Teaching Pedagogies; (4) Instilling Leadership in Faculty; (5) Monitoring, Reflection, and Evaluation; (6) Innovation Ecosystem; and (7)

Internationalization of Higher Education.

This research paper is the outcome of the series of focus group discussions held in different cities to explore and capture perceptions about “What is faculty leadership and how leadership could instill amongst faculty members to achieve HEC’s vision?”

The focus group comprised eight members who are academic staff working in the different higher educational institutions of Pakistan. The details of the focus group participants are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Participants Profile**

<b>Serial No.</b>	<b>Position Title</b>	<b>Sector</b>	<b>Roles and Responsibilities</b>
1.	Vice-Chancellor	Public	Responsible to provide leadership in academics as well as administrative tasks of the university.
2.	Dean of Social Sciences	Private	The individual is responsible for the growth and development of academic as well as research activity in the faculty comprised of five academic departments in the domain of social sciences.
3.	Rector	Private	Responsible for the university Governance and to take major decisions for the mutual interest of students, staff as well as society.
4.	Director Academics	Private	Develop and execute educational processes and policies to accomplish curriculum objectives; and responsible to manage resources to implement academic programs.



5.	Director of Career Planning	Private	Responsible to develop, implement, and evaluate the faculty recruitment process which connects the industry with the university faculty, students, and alumni.
6.	Assistant Professor	Public	Responsible to direct and guide research scholars and design student-centered teaching methodologies enabling them to become professionals.
7.	Pro-Rector	Private	Responsible for university positioning at national and international levels; design and execute agenda for international reputation, international cooperation with other educational institutions, and researcher profile.
8.	Associate Professor	Public	Responsible to teach, arrange seminars, attend conferences, conduct research, and collaborate with other researchers for several administrative as well as research tasks.

The scope of the focus group discussion was to analyze the faculty leadership models of higher education institutes of Pakistan and to brainstorm the guidelines for a general faculty leadership Model in accordance with the HEC vision. The methodology of focus group discussion enables participants to share their common interests in relevance to instilling leadership in faculty. Further the participants were asked to share and reflect on their own experiences while performing the role of

university rectors or in any other capacity within the university leading to the faculty role. The participant's discussion revolves around the questions as presented in table 2.

(1) need to instill leadership in faculty of higher education institutes; (2) Analyze the teacher leadership model; (3) how leadership can be inculcated in the faculty members; and (4) proposition of a general faculty leadership model that aligns with the vision of HEC.

**Table 2: Focus Group questions**

Serial No.	Focus group questions
1.	Why there is a need to instill leadership in the faculty of HEIs of Pakistan?
2.	How the ‘Teacher Leadership Model’ impact the HEIs?
3.	How can leadership be instilled in faculty members (such as through incentives, training programs, assigning leadership roles, etc)?
4.	Is the Proposition of a ‘General Faculty Leadership Model’ aligns with the vision of HEC?
5.	Which particular leadership theory is applicable in academics?

This research offers a forum for participants to openly exchange their leadership viewpoints and draw on the views of each other. It is believed that the approach will create a broad coverage of group expectations as a whole by encouraging the participants to share their personal views. The discussion process of the focus group is a comparatively researcher-free method that provides the group of members with a discussion platform. The researcher’s intervention in the process is minimal. The researcher gives the discussion topics, but the content of the discussions depends upon the emphasis existing in the group. In total, 5 questions were formulated for data collection as presented in Table 2. The discussion topics concerned the definition of leadership, the challenges, roles, and responsibilities of leadership, as well as leadership tasks and training, and the quality of childcare connected to

leadership.

#### **Data Analysis**

Three focus groups were conducted to collect data on the leadership role of faculty within higher education universities that serves the university mission and ultimately accomplish the vision of HEC. The length of each focus group ranges from sixty to ninety minutes. Each focus group discussion was recorded. In addition to the recording, some notes on the discussions were made. The recorded discussions were transcribed for the thematic analysis. Focus group analysis was based on the research interest was to study the leadership context, where the significance and nature of leadership, as well as leadership roles and responsibilities, were discussed and evaluated in the focus groups. The educational administrators discussed the nature as well as the significance of

leadership roles and responsibilities. The researchers summarized the leadership in an educational context after the thorough application of thematic analysis which reflects the participants' opinions. The emerged themes suggested the leadership role required to perform by the faculty members working in higher education institutions.

## **Results**

### **Theme 1: Leadership roles and activities**

All participants considered the role of the university administrator as a position rather than a substantive post. The respondents indicated that none of them had been given any leadership development services to serve their positions. The reactions observed were enlightening in that they revealed various contrasting views of the academicians working in diverse positions. The administrative role performed by a few of the faculty members of a curriculum was perceived to be the primary role: planning, monitoring, connecting personnel, students, and timetables. 'Co-ordination should be there. There should be other workers concerned with specific student concerns. It should be co-ordinating and confirming for me that things are correctly connected through the curriculum.' Some found their position to be more employee and student

leadership.

### **Theme 2: Understanding of faculty leadership**

Faculty leadership was considered an integral part of the numerous academic positions by the majority of the participants. However, there seemed to be a distinction concerning diverse work settings and respective expectations from that particular leadership position. Diverse perception shared by the participants while brainstorming what is meant by faculty leadership? One of the participants shared that grounded in literature and scholarly practice, practicing leadership in academia entirely depends on the assigned position; so leadership is context-based. He further added that he teaches, study and responsible for all the tasks that come under the umbrella of the professor because of the dynamics of the role in a different way or at a different stage. The second viewpoint focuses on the need for 'vision'. Another expert added that "For me, academic leadership is about being the sort of creative person who can transform the traditional reaching modules into interactive and creative interactive teaching sessions and develop other faculty members to adopt and implement the improved student-centered curriculum. While discussing the contested understanding of faculty leadership another view emerged which suggests that faculty leadership has nothing to do with

managerial and functional activities. Faculty members can practice their leadership while delivering lectures and maintaining the class decorum of students from varied backgrounds. As it is very challenging to practice leadership for administrative positions and performing roles as a university professor.

### **Theme 3: Leadership attributes for Academic leaders**

Certain leadership attributes are important for academic leaders. While discussing and describing leadership criteria it has been revealed that the attributes depend on the vision and personality characteristics of a person working in a leadership position. Academic leaders should be visionary and have the capacity to think strategically to transform the generation through the education system. As the vision provides strategic direction, purpose, and significance of empowering faculty members to contribute towards the educational system. Other personal characteristics of an academic leader include emotional endurance to serve a role, passion to create enthusiasm, vision to impart quality education and foresee a future, integrity to implement principles, and discipline to set professional standards in educational reforms

### **Theme 4: Leadership challenges for Faculty**

While all participants experience difficulties in dealing with students from different cultures and needs, methods, and mechanisms that could facilitate the atmosphere of inclusive schools were easily established. A common theme centered on connectivity and teamwork among the focus group participants was collaboration (Adams, 2018). There is an ongoing debate that faculty growing into leadership positions has a conflict with their interests. Hence, engaging productively as an influential leader has always been very critical in educational reforms which call for the intense need for leadership development at the faculty level.

### **Theme 5: Training to instill leadership skills**

One of the hardest channels in academics is to create a process that actively encourages faculty to embrace leadership skills and practice in diverse situations. The universities possess a pool of bright and talented human resources. However, there is a lack of leadership culture which may have influences student-centered learning. The executors of higher education institutions suggested designing the processes and nurture faculty members to instill leadership abilities enabling them to make decisions at all levels which contribute towards student

grooming.

### **Practicing “Situational Leadership” In Educational Settings**

The phenomenon of situational leadership is of real concern in educational settings as academicians performing the role of leaders have no influence on the incoming student’s intellectual level and their ability to learn. If a faculty member creates an environment in class with increased situational interest then that particular environment would influence the willingness of few students to learn that particular concept. Therefore, the challenges with the diverse student's ability to learn and varied levels of maturity are very complex as most of the time faculty development programs revolve around the curriculum and not much focused on the situational factors that may arise in classrooms. Although if the faculty are being trained on practicing the situational interest, the aspects of the curriculum and situational are not being integrated. Hence, the professionals working in educational reforms will have to develop an effective understanding of the genesis of the situational leadership style discovered by (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982).

The concept of situational leadership can easily be applied in the classroom. For example, to achieve maximum learning the win-win approach of the

situational leadership concept applies when the teacher adopts an effective delivery style that matches students’ development needs. In the case of students with a low commitment and some competence in undertaking a classproject, the teacher should use the coaching approach. When students have high competence with variable commitments, a supporting approach by the teacher would be most effective. By correctly matching the delivery method with the needs and capabilities of the students, as itutional designed educational program at different development levels permits the teacher to be most efficient and effective. A win-win situation for the organization, for the students, and the teacher can be achieved by designing as uccessful educational program.

### **What is required from teachers in educational settings as a leader?**

Elaborating the teacher’s role as a leader, they are required to set the performance criteria and develop instructional methods keeping in mind the end goal of the educational institutions (Adams, A. Samat & Abu Samah, 2018). Further teachers are required to be supportive of students in providing them with the opportunity for growth and development and focusing primarily on student’s needs. Considering the Situational Leadership Theory (SLT) by Hersey and Blanchard, the “Situational Teaching Model” offers

several teaching styles for the academicians to be effective situational leaders. Grounded in SLT, the leadership style in teaching perspective is defined as “patterns of behaviors that the teacher employs with students, particularly as perceived by the students themselves” (Baker Iii, 1990), p. 246).

Teachers in the role of leaders can adopt the following situational leadership styles: (1) Redressing teaching style (2) Participating teaching style (3) Empowering teaching style and (4) Persuading teaching style. The premise of the four teaching styles is to adhere to the student’s maturity level concerning a task or a project or an activity. The two dimensions on which the style depends are Supportive teaching behavior (student-oriented) and directive teaching behavior (task-oriented).

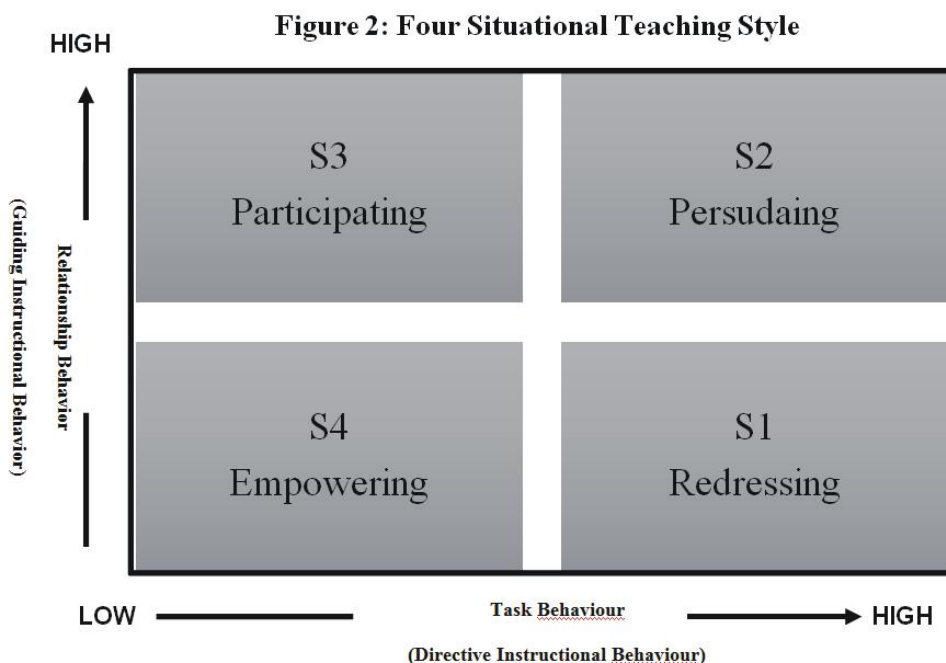
### **Supportive Teaching Behavior**

The supportive teaching behavior is characterized as the degree to which the teacher participates in building an individual; associated with students

through multiple methods for correspondence and communication. Hence, it is termed a student- oriented teaching style. Supporting behavior incorporates facilitating students in their activities, listening to their issues, and support them socially and psychologically.

### **Directive Teaching Behavior**

The directive teaching behavior is characterized by the degree to which the teacher is inclined to be task-oriented. The teachers displaying directive teaching behaviors are active in managing students’ projects and assignments and plan their responsibilities by characterizing their part either as individuals or as a group. Such practices deciphered instructions of what to do when to do it, who is to do it, howto do it, and where to do the task. Consequently, the educator centers his determination to facilitate students in accomplishing the assignments or any activity to fulfill the particular objective



Source: Adams, D. (2018). *Mastering Theories of Educational Leadership and Management*. University of Malaya Press

Figure 1 outlines the two dimensions of the teacher role: the relationship and task behavior. Teachers adopting directive behavior are exhibited on the horizontal axis varying from low to high task whereas the supporting behavior is exhibited on the vertical axis stretching out from low to high supportive behavior. Subsequently, the interplay of two dimensions comes up with four instructional/teaching styles. These styles vary in the level of instructor concern with the educational programs (goals, substance, strategies, and assessment) and with the student's readiness (their requirements and inspiration).

The decision to adopt any of the instructional styles is depending on the

ability and readiness level of the students. Considering the specific objective, it is substantial to know about the most significant factors which influence the situational instructional style. Such factors include the associations amongst the interaction behaviors of teachers, their guiding behaviors, and student's level of readiness. Subsequently, the proposed factors can be utilized considering the students' readiness level.

In the context of higher education institutions, the research on situational leadership outlines four different teaching styles. In each situational leadership style, there is a reflection of students' willingness to learn, and the student's maturity level. Hence, the

discussion on leadership style enhances teachers' perception of wards students centered teaching which is best suited according to the prevailing situation. Summing up the situational leadership model encourage HEI's to maintain a balance while designing course curriculum, instructional methods considering the student's willingness to learn and their intellectual ability Generally, the SLT provides a justified worldview that appears to be defended if leadership is conceptualized considering the situations further leadership revolves around the relational behavior is an indicator of aggregate endeavors toward objective fulfillment.

### **Conclusion**

A qualitative research study was conducted to explore the dilemma of leadership at the faculty level. The participants from different education institutions working on faculty and administrative positions were requested to share their experiences and perceptions about faculty leadership. The experiences shared by the rectors, professors, program managers, and other group members were recorded and supported with handwritten notes. Thematic analysis was performed which reveals qualitative disparities while discussing the leadership role for academicians. Further analysis emerged with five strong themes aligned with the academic leadership of higher education

administrators as well as for faculty. Specifically given the existing literature research sheds light on the significance of practicing situational leadership in educational reforms that teaching students to produce graduates of the twenty-first century. This study provides a significant contribution to the leadership of the educational sector for practicing diverse leadership roles contingent on situations.

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