CHAPTER 2: IMMERSING INTO LEADERSHIP APPROACHES

In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I articulated how culturally disempowering nature of teacher education and research practices has become the *research problem*, thereby highlighting the following key dimensions of the problem as major themes of my inquiry: 1) *Dictating and communicating views of leadership; 2) Narrowly conceived traditional view of curriculum images; 3) Conventional and somewhat learner-centered pedagogies; 4) Assessment as 'of' and 'for' learning approaches; and 5) Objectivist and pluralist research practices.* Given this background, I focus on the first theme of inquiry i.e., Dictating and communicating views of leadership (with research questions in Chapter 2A 2B) and envision a transformative leadership approach (with a research question in Chapter 2C) as the primary basis for my inquiry in this chapter.

With these research questions (in Chapter 2A, 2B & 2C) at my disposal, my inquiry in this chapter aims first to explore key features of dictating approaches to leadership as a vice/principal, teacher educator and research supervisor and its influence on my own learning and the learning of students/teachers, and other colleagues to whom I work and live with (Whitehead, 2008, 2014). Second, I attempt to celebrate freedom (though partial) with different reforms (in different times) at school and at university level roles by embracing a reformist version of teacher education. Finally, I intend to develop an empowering holistic nature of leadership to accomplish an emancipatory interest of education in Pakistan. Given the key purpose of developing a transformative vision of teacher education, I have used letter writing, reflective narration, and dialogical, dialectical, poetic and metaphoric logics as epistemic approaches for my inquiry.

CHAPTER 2A: JOURNEYING INTO PROBABLY DICTATING LEADERSHIP

APPROACHES

Let me start this chapter by recounting my experiences (as a teacher/teacher educator/coordinator) of leading students/teachers at classroom level and at institutional level (as a vice/principal) at different times within different situations, both in the context TU and community schools settings, which provided me a chance to understand leadership differently. My experiences caution me that institutional culture shapes styles/approaches of leaders and leaders shape instructional cultures. With this in mind, my purpose in this chapter is to discuss on the question of the kind, '*How have I experienced a dictating leadership as a vice/principal (in schools) and a teacher educator/research supervisor (in university) in the context of Pakistan?*'

Institutional Cultures as Performance Indicators

Those were my professional days around April 2008. I began my journey of leading a class of student teachers during my role as teacher educator with an image as a single colored curriculum (see Chapter *3A) in the context of TU, a public university with a closed culture- a bureaucratic in a controlled environmental settings with one-size-fits-all notions to accomplish a limited view of teacher education as 'imparting' content and pedagogy for aspiring teachers. With this image in mind, and following institutional guidelines using teaching as lecturing (one way flow of information), I as a leader (teacher educator) had the opportunity to lead /teach my student teachers to accomplish a narrow view of education.*

Perhaps, this objectivist approach seems demonstrating leader as remote sensor with use of power over the class in a monological tone of lecturing. Probably, my emphasis was on how to complete task (syllabus) by keeping myself within timelines, and demonstrating as *task oriented leader* during the first year of my experience as a teacher educator (Northouse, 2007, p.7; Yukl, 2006).

Perhaps, going back to reflect on my early days of working as a community school principal (as I call this period (2001-2003), the initial phase of my school

> 'Read in the name of your Lord Who created. He created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is the Most Honorable, Who taught (to write) with the pen. Taught man what he knew not' (Surah AlAlaq 96: 1-5)

leadership (see 'a man in principal's office' below) seems depicting my leadership role as authoritative and commanding over subordinates. In so doing, I created a culture of school that was more closed, with top down approach to deal with teaching/learning and administering, with a bureaucratic style of a principal sitting in the office, giving directions to staff/teachers how important tasks are to focus on. So, as a school leader, I became successful/able to develop a culture according to my own style of leadership as a *dictating leader*[21] and there was no room for the people (teachers, other staff and students) to do something that was not acceptable in that *crafted culture*[22] within my own beliefs, views, perspectives and perceptions of how to run the school and organize schooling activities. Let me share another experience.

It may be sometimes in April 2008, when I joined in a junior leadership role as a teacher educator/research supervisor and research coordinator. There, I came to realize

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[21] I mean to say a dictating leader is one who dictates, commands, controls and orders others in the context of educational institutions rather demonstrates as a co-worker, yet a facilitative leader. The use of language of leader with the ways of his/her engagement with people represent how dictating the leader is.

[22] A culture that I un/intentionally developed in the school. In so doing my perceived view of leadership was probably embedded within a narrow view of education that can be achieved though highly controlled environment. This narrowed view of leading enabled me to craft a culture of disempowering and imposition rather facilitation and sharing.

that teacher educators were operating within a closed culture of the School of Education. I found, the Dean, during her leadership period, had introduced policies with a narrowly conceived view of educational objectives by controlling teaching/learning and research practices (see Chapter *3A) (Zhu, 2013). That culture of the university could not help me as a teacher educator to do something according to my own initiatives (that might be something creative to facilitate student teachers), which could be helpful to my students for their learning rather focusing on specific objectives to accomplish well within given time frame.*

By reflecting on my role as a teacher educator in such a situation in the context of TU, and my role as school principal to command over through rigid rules, I begin to feel that it is the leader who creates a culture within organization that compels others to delve into that by performing for the survival. This realization led me to think about my role as a school principal, where it was me to create an environment for self/others with a static agenda (with limited visions) using ordering approaches (Frits & Miller, 2003; Taylor, 2011) with fixed schedules that made my *life like a robot*. And that self-created robotic life forced to focus on a more *task-oriented-goal-centric approach,* where I remained focus on how to do things timely without thinking about the teachers, teacher educators, students and other staff member and their problems. In so doing, I kept employees under control that created an environment of institutional imposition and disempowerment among teachers/teacher educators and other employees impacting on teaching/learning activities.

This reflection on my leadership approach as a dictating principal, in the days ahead, helped me to understand my lifeworlds in two different institutional cultures later

(Zhu, 2013). For example, in case of TU, I was forced to delve into a culture that could lead me to play my role as a conventional knowledge transmitter to students in order to prepare them for an exam that is designed to reproduce fixed knowledge.

I came to realize that as supervisors we were not facilitated with desirable level of support to enable research students to develop their concepts clearly rather giving

inadequate time with limited feedback. This kind of little support in research practices but more dependency on research students to do their own research work seemed a kind of power play as research supervisors that we used un/wittingly in the context. Similarly, I experienced a life as a principal of a community school by leading whole team of school and schooling with a focus on my planners, plans, objectives, and directions, to name a few, where I observed my role as ruling others rather facilitating by considering the real challenges of students, teachers and coordinators.

A Man in the Principal's Office: Leader as Authority

It may be sometimes during November 2002. I was in South Community School

"People from different cultures react to task-oriented leadership in different and often unpredictable ways" (Thomas & Inkson, 2004, p. 127).

Pakistan with my routine activities. The community based schools network was developed on the vision to provide all possible opportunities for every child at their door step to access quality education at affordable fees (Qutoshi & Khaki, 2014). With this in mind, everyone as members of the community and employees of the school had been given the responsibility to contribute at the highest level to materialize the concept of providing quality education to the community children (Kayaoglu, 2012).

In this system of schools, I was the fourth principal of the school to carry on my responsibility and play my part of roles to accomplish this vision. To this end, my day at school would begin with attending assembly, giving an 'on and off basis' a brief address to students, a campus round and taking notice of everyone on duty, and having a quick look at key indicators of school and schooling (classes with teachers, offices with people, school entrances with attentive gatekeepers, notice board with updated announcements, and suggestion/complain box duly attending etc.) to ensure things are going on well in control before taking my seat in the office.

The school was situated in an industrial area that was one of the least developed/ underdeveloped areas of Karachi where schools with good quality education are not available as compared to economically stabled areas. In these areas people not only come from different parts of Pakistan to search for their livelihood generation activities contributing to a multicultural community formation, but also come from Afghanistan as refugees adding its diversity beyond the national borders. In this small community school having around 600 students, it seemed that we were forming a cultural montage with multiple identities that formed the multicultural community.

I realize that the community living in this area was highly diverse in nature (with complex multicultural settings having different geographical, political, social, racial, linguistic, economic and other identities, to mention but a few) who would prefer to choose the school to send their children for mainly the following four reasons: (1) access to quality education (comparatively among other schools in the region) at affordable fee; (2) fee remission and/or financial assistance to children from poor families; (3) more

security within the community; and (4) easy access to school at walking distance (Qutoshi & Khaki, 2014).

Probably, these facilities at the doorstep were to be a big support to the community who cannot send their children to expensive schools in this largest city of Pakistan. However, on the other hand, the complex combination of people forming a single community appeared to be a big challenge for the school leader who had to deal very carefully, engaging staff and learners in their teaching/learning practices to accomplish quality education to children (Kayaoglu, 2012). Perhaps, due to complex nature of cultural diversity in school it was difficult to ensure smooth functioning of schooling while dealing with behavioral issues of learners.

This situation reminds me (and my teachers) Paulo Freire's (1998) seminal work 'Teachers as Cultural Workers' while creating a common youth culture in every class and school with an environment conducive discipline that is much needed to maintain. Perhaps, keeping a vigilant eye from the beginning of the day activity, what I call as a *booster[23]* that takes around an hour to make sure everything is fine and the system is running smoothly, till closing the gates seemed to be a challenging task for me.

My Planner as my Guide

It may be Monday, December 2002. I dropped in the office, and as usual, I started looking at my planner. I would do it every day because it guided me on my way to accomplish my fixed targets well within the given time. I didn't want a mess of everything on contingency basis rather well planned, tight control and smooth functioning of the

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[23] The activity provides an energy to start my routine in line with my plans because keeping self/others in a very structured way requires everything should be okay

system like a machine[24]. It would take almost five minutes in my office that after coming

from the morning activity in the campus, I would see a reminder (in my planner) waiting

for me to tell something about syllabus completion deadline that was about two and half

weeks ahead and I paused then and there. That day, I thought to plan a meeting within a

week among teaching staffs. I pressed the bell and a peon quickly appeared for orders to

receive. Looking at him I said, 'Nadir, call Natasha[25] right now.' 'Okay sir, just a

minute', saying this, Nadir disappeared, and within few minutes, Natasha came silently

with her diary plugged in a red and a blue pen and took a seat opposite to my table. She

was habituated about to my strict office rules - when I remain busy with anything/task,

and until I do not ask her, she had to wait for my response.

As I was surfing some previous reports from Subject Coordinators'[26] folder for

just some glimpses (as a review purpose) to make my mind for upcoming meeting, she

remained busy with her official diary, probably, she was checking the tasks to perform at

her end. In the meantime I got what I was searching in the reports and decide what to do

for the upcoming staff meeting. I looked at Natasha and began to speak to her- "Natasha,

I guess, I will have to think about appointing an active vice principal/administrator to

deal with these administrative tasks that engage me most of the time." I continued,

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[24] Using some strict rules of managing things at school can work like who is to do what and how, meaning that rules enable individuals to perform their tasks and avoid uncertainties regarding smooth functioning of the school. Such kind of system is termed as a machine which receives an input, processes and gives an output like a computer.

[25] A composite character working as secretary to Principal for three years.

[26] South Community School has a system of subject coordinators who are trained and qualified teachers in every subject and are responsible to observe respective subject teachers bimonthly, checking their lesson plans weekly on every Saturdays (a professional day for teachers and off day for students), and helping principal in holding subject specific workshops, seminar, one-on-one basis discussions on classroom practices and meetings etc. They are supposed to submit monthly progress reports about every teacher in their subject followed by a meeting with principal for further discussions, updates and suggestions as part of their ongoing in-house professional development program.

"he/she would help me to provide enough time for taking classes and pass more time with teachers and subject coordinators to observe them and engage them in discussions on classroom practices." Again I looked at her and continued, "As you know my busy schedules do not allow me to give more time in teaching/learning activities rather being busy with managing these administrative matters, I am thinking for this change".

'Anyhow let me come to the point now. Well, you need to prepare a notice[27] for an important meeting with teaching staff' I advise Natasha, 'and you need to do this today on priority basis.' 'Sir, what will be the day, date…' Natasha spoke hesitantly? 'Hang on, hang on…' I looked at my diary for a short while and said, 'well, the agenda will be: progress on course completion and expected dates for revision with teacher plans for exams. The day, date, time and venue will be Saturday, 19 Nov, 10:00 am sharp in conference hall. Ensure, no excuses for absence, incomplete preparation and no late comings. Did you get what I mean?', I finished everything without a stop. 'Sure sir, that's fine', Natasha said. 'Good', I appreciated her quick reply and her active listening. I looked at the clock, and said, 'you may go now, and call the parents waiting in the room.'

With reflection on my engagements in school, I came to realize that I was spending more time on administrative activities as compared to pedagogical ones. Unwillingly, I had to focus more administrative activities instead of working towards creating enabling conditions for learning (Memon, 2000). Though well-planned activities are necessary, it seems insufficient to make natural, smooth and humane functioning of the school because it is a living social entity that needs creativity rather embracing fixity.

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[27] We use a register for staff meetings notices to inform and receive acknowledgment from every participants to ensure their attendance in the meeting. The secretary prepare and takes signature from the Principal and send with office assistant to sign from every participant.

This means that I needed to be very open to understand this dynamics of life at school, and need to focus more on academics as instructional leader through effective ways to facilitation rather keeping control like an administrative leader (Memon et al., 2006). However, it seems necessary to improve more close interactions with teachers, students and subject coordinators rather depending upon conventional ways of holding meetings on monthly reports regarding the activities of teaching/learning in the school.

Behavioural Issues in School: Actions as Imposed Sanctions

I was talking to Natasha about a parent whom I called to discuss at a behavioral case, and in connection to that I expelled a student from school. I guess, it was 11:15am, when students were coming out of their classes for a 30 minute routine break time. Ms Zubaida (the class teacher) came to my office saying that she was fed up with her student, Mohsen and his behavior with everyone. She couldn't control him furthermore. "So, please, either keep me in this school or the boy who doesn't listen to anyone" (Hastings & Bham, 2003), she said. In the meantime the physical education instructor came in the office with the Mohsen, who was still arguing with the instructor even in front of us. He was saying that it was the teacher who did not treat him fairly by favoring other students' views. However, at my intervention, he remained silent, and I allowed everyone to speak in their own turn.

Later on, it was disclosed that the boy had started teasing other students first and created a disturbance in the class that could not allow Ms Zubaida to teach in her class. Later, he started shouting at the teacher that created the classroom environment unhealthy to continue teaching. Whole the period was, thus, disturbed. He himself

accepted it later on but that was an extreme case, and as another teacher reported, he had exhibited similar behavior a couple of weeks before.

Reflecting on the situation, there, I came to realize that the case seemed in favor of teachers/school who was demanding to give punishment so that he could learn a lesson. Keeping sound evidences from students, teachers and admin staffs regarding the matter, finally, I decided to expel the boy from the school, (for some days only) and called parents to discuss the matter. Perhaps, the purpose of expulsion was symbolic that I wanted to give a message to the students with behavioral issues, and at the same time for teachers to feel that they are valued and protected. And on the other hand, I was willing to seek the parents' view and possibility of their support in the case. Perhaps, with this in mind, I called his parents the next day to know their position. I must have thought that if they sign the undertaking (on behalf of their son) to avoid repetition of such behaviors, I would allow him to resume the school. Reflecting on the situation regarding behavioral issues in school, I realized that school needs to focus on running counseling sessions for such students in order to avoid such kind of administrative problems which also impact on academics.

Resuming our discussion, I started to explain, 'Natasha you know, I called his parents to discuss the issue that is why I am asking you about them.,' I continued, 'You know these behavioral issues in this school made me very upset, which take most of my creative time in dealing with these matters', 'I can understand sir', Natasha says. 'And at the same time, I am not satisfied with this parent representative[28] body that could do

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[28] School has a sub body consist of few members from the parents under school management committee to take notice of issues regarding students' behaviors, fee collection issues, and other issues related to lack of parents and school coordination matters etc.

some productive work in this regard'. I added, 'do you have some more information about this family?' She thought for sometimes and said, 'Yes sir, I live near their house and sometimes we get chance to chat with each other as well… I guess his parents have also some behavior problems'. After our discussion on the matter, I began to reflect on the incident, and I came to know that some students in school try to behave in the same manner as they do at home. It means that if students are exposed to negative behaviors at home they tend to exhibit the same in school also (Hastings & Bham, 2003).

In the meantime the parent entered into the office and started arguing why her son was expelled from the school. I discussed the matter with the parent and explained our policy on behavioral issues, which she at the end realized that she and her husband are ready to sign an undertaking to ensure no repetition of such behavior, in case, her son is given one more chance to continue his study. The parents agreed to provide an undertaking that the child will not repeat such kind of behavior again, and reached on a consensus. The child was permitted to continue his classes.

I was reflecting on school policy that seemed friendly towards children even with such a disciplinary kind of issue on one hand, and my own authoritative attitude towards handling such kind of matter by expelling students for behavioral issues, on the other. This reflection on my leadership approaches in such a culturally complex educational institution, led me to realize limitations of such an authoritative style of leadership that seemed creating obstacles to create a conducive learning environment in school.

Similarly, my role as a teacher educator/research supervisor/coordinator under the leadership of Dean, remained an authoritative one. Having a position of team leader

immersed within an organizational imposition and disempowering culture, I exercised my power over team members with a conventional top-down approach to deal with them.

Dictating and Colonizing Zayne[29]: Yet Another Context of Acting as Authority

It was the year 2009. I was appointed as research coordinator to manage research activities of student teachers at the School of Education, TU. The university offers teacher education to pre service teachers with a newly launched four years degree program as B. Ed (Hons) and Associate Degree in Education (ADE), in addition to offering Masters Degree in Education.

As the university is a public sector institution, and I am feeling that it has a bureaucratic top-down culture to deal the activities of teaching, learning and research practices that doesn't seem helping students and teacher educators to move towards meaning-cantered teacher education in the context (Kovbasyuk & Blessinger, 2013). Perhaps, imposing tasks/roles and additional responsibilities to co-workers has been considered as delegation in this culture. It might be the reason that I was assigned an additional responsibility (by the Dean) as a research coordinator to look after the activities of research supervision at the School of Education TU. I think, in that context we (I and my co-workers) had been engaged with discussions and discourses regarding (supervision) research activities with student teachers. Let me share one of such discussions we had that time.

Mr Tanqeed said, 'I think we need to provide specific hours to our research students, otherwise they would come anytime to seek assistance.' 'Do you mean we

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[29] Zayne is a composite character. She is working as a teacher educator/supervisor at School of Education at TU.

should not help them if they seek support from us?' Ms Butterfly inquired. 'Ah, I do not

mean that we should not give them support, yet we need to be very much organized in our

supervisor-supervisee interaction time span', Tanqeed explained. And at that moment I

was just observing what was going on among them. 'Then it's okay', Ms Butterfly

expressed. Perhaps, she agreed with his idea of proving a fixed time for supervision.

Reflecting on the discussion led me to realize that the supervisors were looking to

be very much objectivist in their interactions rather being humanistic towards their

supervisees in order to provide enough support. Later on, I came to realize that perhaps

my way of dealing with co-workers was not that much humanistic as well, rather more

authoritative one. Now at this time I am reflecting critically on few of my roles as

research coordinator in that particular context in the following letter to Zayne.

February, 2015

Dear Zayne,

I hope you are fine and doing well. I am recalling few moments of our working

together as a team (perhaps, since July 2009) regarding how to manage research

supervising activities at TU. Zayne, I came to realize that I had been very authoritative in

dealing the matters with you and other team members as a coordinator (a team leader).

Here, I realize that one should not be so dictating. But believe me Zayne, my intention

was to do something good for student teachers, and unknowingly I could not use a very

participatory approach, rather a commanding one.

Thus, realizing it, now I am confessing with you through this letter that it was not

a facilitative approach to lead. Perhaps, this confession would help us to become true to

ourselves so as to develop humility in our nature while engaging with students and co-

worker, yet in a professional manner. Zayne, I am writing this letter to you for two purposes. The first purpose is to confess through this letter that my role as a team leader had been a commanding one rather more facilitating one. Perhaps, due to that leadership approach I could not help you to the extent that was desirable. Instead, I might have hurt you in many ways unknowingly. I think, one of the reasons for adopting such approach might be the culture, where we mostly remain dependent on our team leaders and their directives. Perhaps, it might be due to the dictating culture that exists in the university that compel us to remain dependent upon seniors as our leaders, and as leader (at different levels) we are using that authority over others. That might be the reason that I could take many such decisions as a dictating team leader.

My Role as Authority: Selecting Acting Coordinator

Dear Zayne, I remember when the Dean assigned me yet another responsibility to identify an active team member as acting coordinator and handover the responsibilities of coordination, I again used my role as authority by selecting you among others based on my own decision. Perhaps, it could have been better to discuss with you all in the team and take a decision based on our mutual discussions regarding the willingness to be a volunteer for such an additional responsibility, rather imposing my own decision on you.

Zayne, as I have already mentioned that in our organizational culture, we tend to impose things on co-workers, thinking that by doing so they will perform well. However, the outcomes of such kind of dictating styles of leadership with imposition seem creating a culture of colonization of new kind that really needs to change. Perhaps, we can think about how we can come with an alternative model of working collaboratively. Similarly, I would like to confess yet another kind of my approach to dictating leadership regarding

supervising student teachers that was also a kind of imposing ideas rather seeking your views and coming with mutual decisions to improve our practices.

Supervising Students as Dictating

Dear Zayne, you may remember once (could be any Monday back in July 2009) we discussed some of the issues, which one of our colleagues raised. I remember, according to him student teachers were facing problems while selecting their research topics for their thesis, and in developing proposals. In that connection, one of our faculty members was talking about the stories of two research students. According to him they were worried about their lack of clarity on how to prepare a proposal, and they were even having problems in selecting a research topic.

He advised them not to be dependent upon supervisors, and change their habits of keeping over expectations from educators/research supervisors. He was to say, 'teaching is our (i.e., the faculty members as research supervisors) part of the job and doing research is your (i.e., student teachers, supervisees) task, so try to do by yourself, then only you will become a researcher.' I was reflecting on that and thinking perhaps, that kind of dealings with student teachers might hurt them and might lead to develop a perception about our lack of support for them.

Dear Zayne, there might be so many cases of our roles as dictating rather facilitating. However, with these few examples of such kind, I would like to close this letter here. I hope this confessional letter would find you soulful and would help to realize my situation at that time, and a change in my view of leadership approach with my ongoing professional development with my doctoral research project at this stage.

And I would like to say best of luck with your new role as acting coordinator! Until then...

Truly Yours

Sadruddin Qutoshi

Here, I was reflecting on my role as a senior researcher coordinator that seems to be more directing the co-workers rather encourage collaborative ways to provide assistance for improving practices. In the letter, though, I remain confessional towards my practices as a team leader and expressed my intentions of dealing in that way, I mention my vision for future collaborative and participatory approach to team work. However, changing our way of dealing can improve the organizational culture and would help co-worker to improve their performance with facilitation rather dictation.

Closure and my Way Forward

My reflections inform me that it is the leadership that seems to create opportunities and/or obstacles for co-workers in their professional development. Leadership can create ways to engage staff in activities for their professional development with a participatory approaches. On the other hand, it can use a dictating approach to impose things that may colonize their thinking. Perhaps, a facilitative approach to leadership can better help to develop a conducive environment for learning.

With my critical self-reflection, here, I come to realize that my early days of leadership practices seem to be more managerial and less pedagogical one in case of school and more suggestive rather supportive in case of the university. With this learning, in the next chapter, I am going to discuss on one of the hermeneutic paradigms to leadership.