CHAPTER 2B: ACCOUNTING FOR SOMEWHAT COMMUNICATING LEADERSHIP APPROACHES

Chapter 2A contributes in what ways narrowed view of leading through directing restricts co-workers to expend multiple opportunities for learning. For example, reflecting

> As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others- Bill Gates

on my dictating approaches to leadership at different levels of educative processes in the context of leading a community school set up, and experiences of a teacher educator at TU context within a conventional way of controlling, supervising and informing nature of teaching/learning and research activities to accomplish a narrow view of education helped me to realize its limitations. Arriving at this point of my inquiry, I began to ask to myself- how other styles of leadership as an alternative would better help self/others to improve our practice. Reflecting on this view, in this Chapter 2B, my purpose was to address yet another important research question- *How did I begin to act as a (possibly) communicating leader while still I was working as a school vice/principal, and later as research coordinator/educator at the University?*

Communication as Life of Organization: Setting the Scene

I remember, when reforms in higher education were focusing on modifying and/or revising curriculum, pedagogies, assessment and research activities, those activities were areas of interests for me to understand my role as a teacher educator/researcher and supervisor while engaging with student teachers in the context of TU. Probably, during 2009-2010, I got some opportunities to play my limited role as a representative from my university in curriculum development (see Chapter 3B). Perhaps, the image of curriculum

as intended learning outcomes, using a restraint version of student centered pedagogy (see Chapter 4B) i.e., providing students with some opportunities to communicate, participate and discuss (Fairhurst, 2014) was not being meaningful as intended. As an educational leader, I must have thought that my role should be a facilitative one for my student teachers in their learning.

Perhaps, to me, this exposure to reforms, to some extent, was a beginning towards my journey with a realization on the way to a radical shift (i.e., a shift from ordering to communicating, facilitating and collaborating). Then, I began to realize many limitations such as dealing with challenges of resources scarcities, facing lack of institutional support to accomplish desirable learning outcomes of the reforms in teacher education and limited exposure to research within multiple paradigms to knowing (Fairhurst, 2014). However, arriving at this point of my self-reflective inquiry, I begin to reflect on middle stages (during the year 2003) of my experience, where I lead a community school by embracing whole school improvement vision, which had enabled me to understand the meaning of positive change.

Perhaps, that virtual wondering of back and forth led me to realize how the institutional culture enabled me to build close interactions with real agents of change i.e. the teachers, teacher educators/coordinators, who were engaged with teaching/learning practices) in order to improve the practices at a community school. With such experiences, I began to question the reformation that *how it could be an effective agenda for improvement when its focus is not on agents of change, but only on other resources* (Caldwell & Spinks, 2007). Of course, other resources are necessary, yet focusing on teachers' professional develop appears to be more important than just focusing on things

(i.e., material resources) for bringing a meaningful change in terms of improving with a meaning-centered education (AKU, 2015; Kovbasyuk & Blessinger, 2013).

To bring a positive change in the status quo of an institution, a communicating leadership seems to play better role, and can bring a positive change in the organizational culture (Orland-Barak, 2010). To me, a communicative leadership would be an approach that focuses on more humanistic view by focusing on improving communications (communication as one of central part of leadership) between and among the staff members and beyond in order to come with collaborative, cooperative and coordinative ways to deal with each other while performing their roles and responsibilities. This view of leadership seems to be more *people-centric* (Northhouse, 2010), leading the leaders to move towards meaning centered teacher education in the context of schools, colleges and universities, where teachers and other staff members can create an environment with effective communication strategies to facilitative for learning to occur (Kovbasyuk & Blessinger, 2013; Fairhurst, 2014).

Working as Communicative Leader

Those were days around March 2003. The school was in its full swing with the beginning of its new academic year. I was looking at the school atmosphere very closely which was seen quite different as compared to my earlier observations some two years before. There, I had begun to realize that the more I give time with students, teachers and subject coordinators, the more I will be able to understand their problems in teaching/learning, and would be in a better position to help them in resolving the

problems. With this in mind I started spending more time discussing classroom stories

with the teachers and subject coordinators. Probably, this interaction helped me to

realize where I could support them, how I could initiate things and why such

collaboration was so important for me as a leader etc.

Active Interactions as Means to Change

Reflecting on the change in my way of interactions, I felt that school staffs were

gradually initiating discussions on their practices with me as compared to my previous

role, where most of the time I would sit in my office, and would dictate them, exercising

my symbolic authority (Fairhurst, 2014). I realized that such exercising of authority

(principal with dictating role) had created a distance between me and my staffs. However,

after coming out of the office (principal's office as symbol of authority), and increasing

my interactions with staffs by discussing school related success stories and challenges in

their respective areas, it helped me to understand actual issues of the school and

schooling.

In my attempt to shift my authoritative role to communicative role, I began to

realize that sometimes frequent discussions and dialogues with some staff members

would go so frank that there was always a risk that my leadership position was likely to

be taken for granted. There I would ask to myself '*To what extent frankness and*

collegiality with staff can be healthy for the purpose of brining improvements, nurture

creativity and mindfulness in our practices (Thompson, 2014)?' On the other hand, I

observed that more close interactions with teachers and students reduced frequent

interactions with wider community members within school hours. Perhaps, that was the

reason that some community members began to complain that I could not give them time

to discuss their matters (community members as part of school). Soon I realized that gap, and to address those issues related to community involvement, I assigned the task to Natasha (an assistant to principal) who was likely to manage it well.

This kind of shift in my way of dealing with staff, on one hand seemed to improve the confidence of staff especially the novice teachers who kept a distance between me and themselves to avoid possible questioning about their progress (previously), and on the other hand it helped me to extend more support to such new teachers in knowing more about their problems. Perhaps, this was the change in my way of interactions with staff that enabled me to develop my trust in teachers (Fairhurst, 2014). With this kind of observations, I begin to feel that the level of trust between teachers and me in my earlier role as directing leader (see Chapter 2A) was perhaps lower as compared to developing an open environment in the school with communicating style of leadership. With this shift in my thoughts and performances, I begin to feel an open environment in school, and I began to feel that such changes created more spaces for everyone to expand his/her learning through interactions, sharing ideas and learning from each other's experiences.

Communicative Leadership as Empowering

Once (a day in November, 2003), I was discussing how teachers were feeling about their progress and what problems they were facing while engaging with their students in their classes. One of the new teachers expressed her views that she was now feeling quite different as compared to the previous environment. She further explained that earlier it was difficult even to cross from principal's office in fear of possible questions he would ask. On my further probing she told me that earlier they (teachers)

would think that I was too strict in my dealing with staffs, and that had created a fearful environment, where I would not allow them to be more expressive with me as a principal (Sewani, 2010).

After these close interactions with school staffs, I began to reflect on my ways of leading my co-workers, and started thinking about such changing perspectives of staffs on me as their leader. This inspired me to be more interactive with them, so that I could better help them to be more participatory towards our common goals (Fairhurst, 2014). With these reflections on my practices, I left by earlier habit to converse in a strict and/or in a harsh manner with staffs. Instead, I focused on how to be more sensitive, and more 'human-like' towards the rules of the school.

Perhaps, my body language and seriousness must have been the reasons that staffs were quite formal in their interactions with me. Such seriousness would create a kind of artificial environment in those days. I guess, the change in leading style not only changed my own lifeworld but also changed the whole school environment, where teachers seem more comfortable to discuss their stories of classroom lives in a professional way that was what I was looking for. Perhaps, for a pedagogical leader it is important to develop more close interactions with teachers to improve teaching/learning by helping them on the very spot rather depending on the report to see on monthly basis (Sergiovanni, 2000). Perhaps, this reflection led me to a double loop learning cycle through going back to my past and exploring the areas, and coming to present to improve in my practices (Argyris & Schon, 1974, 1978; Punjwani, 2013).

Similarly, when I look at my role as communicative leader (research coordinator) at university (during 2009), the following letter (which I articulate in next paragraph)

posits that engaging and caring behavior of leaders with colleagues/co-workers not only enable them to improve their practices, but also help them to develop their confidence in taking initiatives to change practices for improvement (Fairhurst, 2014; Nawab, 2011). Perhaps, this letter to an acting coordinator appears to inform 'to what extent my role as people centered, and yet task-oriented style of leadership developed a close interaction among the team members while working with and sharing for improving their actual practices of supervising student teachers.'

Communicating is not Just Enough: Reflecting as a Research Coordinator

As communicative leadership (Hart, 2009; Johansson, 2001) seems to focus on more improving the practices with more collaborative and coordinative ways to share ideas and communicate things with each other, yet it seems not enough to make a big difference in the lives of learners just by providing a meaning centred teacher education (Fairhurst, 2014: Smythe & Norton, 2007). Perhaps, reforms in teacher education to some extent with a limited view of freedom seem to focus on improving practices, yet there are many things to do with inclusive approaches to facilitate learners (Huma, 2014). In this consideration, let us make meaning together from the letter below:

July, 2015

Dear Zayne,

Hope this letter finds you well!

I am feeling good to know about the progress over there. It is what I call a beginning of change in our practices. Every great change starts from first step. We have started our journey, yet we have to do a lot more to bring a meaningful change in our

engagement with reforms agenda in teacher education and research practice in Pakistan since 2009.

Zayne, I really appreciate your efforts as a research coordinator for continuing the practices of sharing lived stories of teaching/learning and research supervision practices, which we have started with an intention of doing good (i.e., to improve our practices of research supervision). Perhaps, the most important thing, you may agree with me, is to think about how we can keep this development a sustainable one. I mean a sustainable development can keep us on track while engaging with overarching objectives/goals of professional development rather than implanted improvement with external motivation (Aga Khan University [AKU], 2014).

Perhaps, you would favor the idea that reforms are necessary, yet not sufficient to bring a meaningful change that is sustainable for a longer period of time. Because such kind of a change could help the beneficiaries at the receiving ends (i.e., the teachers and students). Anyhow little is better than nothing. So, reforms can help us with bits and pieces that is what I am looking through a historical lens in the context of this country.

Working as Reformers

Zayne, I begin to feel a little change, and would like to say thanks to reforms moment in teacher education that at least enabled us to critique its overemphasis on superficial changes, and for being less conscious towards the core change agents. Would you not ask me why it is superficial and not a complete package of development? Let me share my views with you that for any kind of change in education, it is the teachers who with their capacities can make the dreams into reality, depending on how knowledgeable, skillful, and committed they are with positive dispositions and behaviors. Perhaps, it

seems necessary to focus on teachers/teacher educators/researchers to develop their

competencies required to embrace meaningful change in education (AKU, 2015; Smythe

& Norton, 2007).

And I believe, without this focus in any kind of reforms can no longer sustain. So, Zayne, I have come to make meaning that reforms are not leading us towards a

sustainable development in teacher education in the context of Pakistan. However, the little development under reforms in terms of resources, trainings and implementation of a centralized curriculum as set of tasks, learning outcomes and cultural reproduction that led us to bring a change in status quo, to some extent facilitate learners (Grundy, 1987).

> 'Leading change is always 'for the sake of' something...'for-the-sake-of' is the 'calling' that captures the ear, the thinking, and the soul of a leader. It seeps into the body to be there in the middle of the night, to accompany one day-by-day, tugging, exciting, pushing, never leaving alone. Every day is a leading towards the calling and a thinking towards that which calls. Thinking leadership is always towards the call that matters, and that is shared by 'we'. Thinking leading is thinking the call that keeps calling' (Smythe & Norton, 2007, pp.19-20).

Perhaps, you must have realized that as you are

leading the series of activities of research and the discussions with the colleagues/teacher

educators at the School of Education, it seems important to communicate with each other

through in/non/formal ways to develop better understanding of our practices (Fairhurst,

2014). I guess, such views would lead us to reflect upon our practices to improve further.

Engaging as Sharing and Caring

Zayne, you may remember that in my earlier letter I had shared my own stories

related to a class of ICT in Education, where I used different strategy to embrace the

concept of change in teaching with CTs as tools to improve practices that was likely to be

a kind of student centered (Sulaiman, Aslam, Behan & Fanoos, 2012). Perhaps, you must

have felt that I was vulnerable in my practices by sharing my week areas in my

teaching/learning and assessment practices. And you can realize that was necessary to provide an example for others to be open in the same way for the sake for common good.

I was reflecting on the change in my practices. Perhaps, it was to focus on students and their active involvement in the process of teaching/learning that enabled me to observe them engaging in discussions while working on activities in the class. Probably, that strategy was considerably okay because when adults are purposefully involved to take responsibility in their active learning, and when they are encouraged to share whatever they learn from each other in group discussions on topics they perform well (Smythe & Norton, 2007).

Zayne, my purpose of sharing the story is to provide an opportunity for joint venture to learning from each other's experiences. Perhaps, you would be interested to explore more about how we can improve our practices. I guess one of the things that I believe may work better is to become more open by sharing our lived experiences with embodied values in our practices and reflect on them. In this way, by sharing my lived experiences of classroom practices, I can offer you and other colleagues an opportunity to reflect on your own practices and come with your own lived experiences of classroom teaching and supervising students (Fairhurst, 2014). For example, let me share my own experiences of reflecting on my embodied values of 'intention of doing good for others, humility for humanity, care of self and others with ecological consciousness, love and peace' for a meaningful change in my practices not only enable me to come with my living contradiction in my efforts to create my own living-theory (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2016), but also enable me to critique the limitation of reforms.

You know, Zayne, telling and listening stories of each other can help us to learn new insights, reflect on our own stories, and think about good practices. It enables us to be more critical and creative, and thus, encourage us to change those practices which seem not helpful. Thus, developing a culture of communicating through sharing practices in such a way seems a powerful epistemic approach to learning, which we can use in our practices to improve self/others, which can lead us towards double loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1974, 1978; Punjwani, 2013). Zayne, if you are interested on it, I would like you to keep on sharing your own practices and also encourage other colleagues to be very expressive and generous in their sharing lived experiences openly for the sake of improvements at personal and societal level (others within the context) through learning by sharing.

Knowing as Unpacking Living Contradiction

Zayne, believe me this practice of continuous engagement with our professional sessions would help us to ask question of the kind, *'To what extent openness to our real stories of classroom life and sharing those stories with colleagues, may be in dis/similar situations, can help us to understand our living contradictions* (Whitehead, 1989, 2015). As Jack Whitehead reminds us that we, as teacher educators, have your own values which highly demand us to be embodied in our actions. To this end, watching our own practices through video recordings, and critically reflecting on our thinking and actions enable us in knowing our own living coordination (walk the talk) (Whitehead & Huxtable, 2016).

Zayne, let me share my personal views here with you. I think, coming with critical reflection on those values embedded in our actual practices in which we are engaged with learners help us to see our own actual performance (with embodied values)

as a living contradiction. I think these kinds of critical self-reflections can be very powerful tools to understand this living contradiction towards a meaningful change. Whitehead's (1989, 2014, 2015) call to educational practitioners remind me that I as a living contradiction engaged with embodied values as explanatory principles to generate my own living-theory of education by questioning myself in a simple, yet very powerful and critical way of engaging like, 'How am I improving my teaching and supervision of research graduates?

Zayne, I call this process a spiral rather cyclical way of building meaning of our own learning, actions and reflections that enable us to transform our way of becoming professionally growing educators in the context. Perhaps, reflecting critically on our own practices with our embodied values can lead us to create our own living-theory of self-transformation. Lets' share another example within my context where I began to reflect on myself as an educational technologist[30]. There, I began to ask 'to what extent I was becoming more critical to my beliefs, assumptions, expectations and myths that using CTs in teaching/learning improve practices (Qutoshi, 2014). Perhaps, similar reflections on your own values and actions/the practices as educators would help you to understand your own living contradictions as leader in the field of teacher education, and that would help you to improve your practices by creating your own living-theory.

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[30] I as a teacher educator used computer technologies as pedagogical tools to improve practices with the assumptions and myths that using computer technologies in teaching/learning and research could make a big difference in the lives of practitioners. With reforms agenda un/wittingly I have been a supporter of this view, and encouraged those technologists engaged with TLPs at teacher education programs in the context of TU in Pakistan.

Critical Self-reflections as Professional Development Strategy

Zayne, let me share that my purpose of being critically reflective to the use of technologies in my TLPs does not mean that I am rejecting its benefits. And at the same time, I am neither opposing the use of technologies nor disagreeing with its role and importance in our everyday professional practices, but the myths, expectations and assumptions we attached to it makes me critical.

These un/wittingly taken for granted views about use of technologies seems compelling for us to embrace them because they are assumed to be the only ways that make a difference in the lives of self/students. Zayne, Perhaps, it makes a sense to me that technologies can help us like assistants/partners to some extent, in our way to teaching/learning and research. However, overemphasis on these tools and myths regarding the magical powers to improve practices (Sulaiman et al., 2012) may not leave space for us to celebrate multiple ways of knowing to lead as effective communicative leaders.

Zayne, arriving at that stage of life, I had already begun to adopt learning as continuous and dynamic process. Based on this way of making meaning, I began to ask question, 'in what ways I can think about multiple ways of knowing to make better sense of my teaching/learning and research by using

> There are perhaps paths that lead us again and again to people who have one and the same function for us: passageways that always, in the most diverse periods of life, guide us to the friends, the betrayer, the beloved, the pupil or the master -Walter Benjamin

possible alternative approaches?' And how this approach to knowing can enable me to become an effective communicative leader.

Zayne, I guess this letter is becoming longer than what I was expecting. So, let me write you another letter next time by discussing on how we can as transformative teacher

educators engage with our professional development practices more with the idea of

embracing a transformative research paradigms (Taylor, 2015). And hopefully in the

next letter, I will share my view more explicitly on this holistic-inclusive view,

articulating how that may bring a paradigm shift in researcher's thinking, believing and

understanding practices through transformative lenses. Until then...

Truly Yours

Sadruddin Qutoshi

Meaning Making as/for Communicative Leadership

My reflection on my own practices within the hermeneutic paradigms of

> '…head teachers should develop and be able to use a democratic, learning and communicative form of school leadership that has its starting point in the national curriculum' (Johansson, 2001, p.18).

leadership as a communicative leader and its impact on my co-workers and students through 'democratic learning and communicative form of school leadership' (Johansson, 2001, p.18; Begum & Khan, 2012) does not

mean to neglect the tasks and become friendly towards people only. Rather it means to be

more helpful to perform their tasks by enabling to come with an intrinsic motivation

through more caring, sharing and assisting attitude and behaviors as leaders. This very

aspect of *communicative leadership as supporter* with the notions of sharing and caring

creates conditions for improving capacities to perform in a better way (Fairhurst, 2014;

Hart, 2009).

After my certain paradigmatic changes on my previous approaches to *leadership*

as informer, commander and/or dictator, it enabled me to change my way of dealing with

co-workers with more open and communicating style, which seemed to create conditions

for facilitation and participation with open heart and mind by sharing their lived

experiences during professional discussion sessions to improve practices of supervising student teachers' research activities. Thus, my experiences with communicative leadership appears to be much better approach to win the heart and minds of people on one hand, and improve practices on the other hand.

Closure and my Way Forward

Of course, physical resources are very important but teachers are the most important resources to bring positive changes in learning conditions. I remember, when I started focusing on improving communication with teachers and other staff members at school that enabled me to create a sharing and caring environment. Such an environment helped me to improve teaching/learning practices and developed a team of teachers with improved communication, which led me to improve their confidence and capacity to perform better as compared to my conventional approach to dictating style to leadership.

Perhaps, leaders need to be well aware of aspirations of people, and their needs, combining it with supporting feedbacks to improve their practices with more caring, open and faire communicative approaches. Based on this meaning making process, in the next chapter, I am going to discuss on how an inclusive-holistic approach to knowing as a basis for a transformative leader can help to transform self/others' practices.