

The Behavior of Leaders

Findings in a study of leader behavior may have interesting implications for teachers.

WE WILL greatly increase our understanding of leadership phenomena if we abandon the notion of "leadership" as a trait, and concentrate instead upon an analysis of the behavior of leaders. It is not easy to accomplish this shift in viewpoint, for our ways of thinking about "leadership" have been encumbered by many beliefs not in accord with behavioral facts. The problem is further exacerbated because "leadership" is a value-laden concept charged with much emotion. To be a leader is "good"; not to lead is "bad"—so each of us fancies himself a leader. We consequently have tended to use "leadership" primarily as a slogan, not as a strictly scientific concept. But even our gains from the use of this term as a rallying cry have been short-lived and spurious because we inevitably have been plagued by the fuzziness of our definitions. Hence, in the present context we first shall examine the definitional problem, noting the strategic advantage of studying *leader behavior* as distinguished from "leadership" *per se*; and shall then describe two leader behavior skills that clearly characterize "effective" leaders, and comment on their pertinence for teachers.

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"Leadership" has been used in a variety of ways, most commonly in referring to the "leader" as an outstanding member of a class. Thus, radio and TV commercials proclaim that such-and-such is the leading brand of cigarettes, and that Marilyn Monroe is the leader of our current covey of actresses. Because of our American predilection for bigness, in no matter what sphere, the "leader" in this sense refers to the most popular product—or more specifically, to that item with the greatest sales-market potential. Similarly in education, we often confuse "leadership" with sheer bigness.

Problem in Definition

But this use of the term applies equally to either things or people, and fails to take into account the central psychological characteristic of leader behavior: that this is the behavior of a leader functioning vis-à-vis members of a group in an endeavor to facilitate the solution of group problems. The behavior of the leader and the behavior of group members are inextricably interwoven, and the behavior of both is determined to a great degree by formal requirements imposed by the institution of which the group is a part. For example, Mary Noel, fourth grade teacher, is the formally designated leader of the children in her class. How she behaves as a leader is influenced by

the behavior of the children (which includes their expectations of how a teacher *should* behave as a leader) and is conditioned, moreover, by the policies and regulations, both written and unwritten, of the particular school system in which she is employed. As a result of the year which they spend with her, the children in Mary's class are expected to show certain minimum changes in behavior, especially in respect to scholastic achievement and skill in interpersonal relations. The accomplishment of these objectives is the salient group problem to the solution of which Mary must contribute, and it is presumed that her contribution will be greater than that of any other group member in her fourth grade class. This, of course, is why she was employed.

In accepting her assignment as teacher of the fourth grade, Mary assumes a role as leader of this group. This, however, tells us absolutely nothing about the "effectiveness" of her performance in this role, i.e., how effectively she contributes to the solution of group problems. What, then, are we to mean by "leadership"? The assumption of a leader's role? The "effectiveness" with which this role is performed? Or the capacity of the individual to perform this role effectively? And here we are confronted by the further question: "effectiveness" in respect to what criteria? for research on leader behavior shows that "effectiveness" in respect to Criterion X is not necessarily correlated with "effectiveness" in regard to Criterion Y. For example, the behavior of a leader who is "effective" in maintaining high "morale" (a sticky term that requires a much clearer definition than has as yet been accorded it) and good human relations within the group is not necessarily "effective" in accomplishing high production and goal-achievement.

This definitional dilemma emerges from

the fact that we have incorporated into the term "leadership" both descriptive and evaluative components, and have thus burdened this single word (and the concept it represents) with two connotations: one refers to a role and the behavior of a person in this role, and another is a straightforward evaluation of the individual's performance in the role. We have compounded this confusion even more by conceptualizing "leadership" as an essentially innate capacity of the individual manifested with equal facility regardless of the situation in which the leader finds himself. This belief, however, is unsupported by research evidence; for as Stogdill (14) and Gibb (3) have shown in their comprehensive surveys of the research literature on leadership, a large share of variance in leader behavior is associated with concomitant variance in specific situational factors. Stated baldly, this means that it is possible for Mary to function "effectively" as a leader in the fourth grade class of East Clambake Elementary School and yet operate quite "ineffectively" as a leader in the fourth grade class of West Clambake Elementary School. In brief, much depends on the situation.

How can we circumvent this semantic tangle? The first step is to focus our attention upon the *behavior* of leaders without imputing to the individual a fixed capacity for "leadership." Note that the phrasing of our questions dictates the form of our answers. Thus, if we ask the question, "What is leadership?"¹ we assume gratuitously that such a capacity exists. This assumption violates the warn-

¹ A question phrased like this implies a materialistic theoretical model, rather than a mathematical one. For a discussion of the difference in these models in respect to the question, "What is electricity?" see the pertinent discussion by Young in his superb book, *Doubt and Certainty in Science* (16, p. 109 ff.).

ing of the semanticists who have stressed the point that words are to events as maps are to territories, and that a word is useful to only such extent as it corresponds to the territory of events it purports to describe.² On this score the term "leadership" is of dubious value and may be likened to a map for which no corresponding territory exists in the "real" world. Granted that the word possesses some hortatory appeal, there is little place for it in strictly scientific inquiry.

What, then, do we gain by shifting our emphasis from "leadership" to the analysis of the *behavior of leaders*? There are two major methodological advantages. In the first place, we can deal directly with observable phenomena, and need make no *a priori* assumptions about the identity or structure of whatever capacities may, or may not, undergird these phenomena. Secondly, this formulation keeps at the forefront of our thinking the importance of differentiating between the *description* of how leaders behave and the *evaluation* of the "effectiveness" of their behavior in respect to specified performance criteria.

Leader Behavior

This focus upon leadership behavior rather than upon "leadership," together with a careful differentiation between the *description* and the *evaluation* of the leader's behavior, is an outstanding characteristic of the research approach used in The Ohio State Leadership Studies, a ten-year interdisciplinary program initiated in 1946 and undertaken to study the behavior of persons assumed to be in leadership positions in business, educational and governmental organizations. This program, under the aegis of the

² This point was presented first by Korzybski (12), but a more readable discussion may be found in Johnson (11).

Personnel Research Board of The Ohio State University, is directed by Carroll L. Shartle, who has described some phases of this work in his recent book, *Executive Performance and Leadership* (13). The separate studies have been reported in Air Force and Navy technical reports, and in the professional literature; and a series of technical monographs³ on this research has been published this year by the Bureau of Business Research of The Ohio State University. We shall note findings about leader behavior that are especially relevant for teachers.

A Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) was devised to measure the behavior of leaders as perceived by members of their work-groups and by their immediate supervisors. The 150 items incorporated into the original form of the LBDQ were selected from a pile of 1,790 items. In the course of successive revisions, the number of items in this questionnaire has been reduced to 40, chosen on the basis of a factorial analysis by which we identified two major dimensions of leader behavior (8):

*Initiating Structure-in-Interaction*⁴ refers to the leader's behavior in delineating the relationship between himself and the members of his group, and in endeavoring to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication, and ways of getting a job done. The leader establishes "Structure" in the way the group members interact with him and with each other so that whenever the group is confronted with a novel problem, the members can resort to these Structures-in-Interaction to facilitate the solution of group problems. Hence the group members are not dependent upon the leader for fresh and specific instructions on how to handle each new problem that arises.

³ The first of these, by Stogdill and Shartle (15), describes the plan of the series and lists the separate titles.

⁴ This is a key concept in the theory of leadership developed by John K. Hemphill (10).

Consideration refers to behavior that reflects friendship, mutual trust, respect and warmth in the relationship between the leader and group members. This represents the "human relations" aspect of leader behavior.

Originally, these two dimensions of leader behavior were identified in a study of aircraft commanders; but subsequent research has shown their applicability to factory foremen (2), school superintendents (6, 7), school principals (1), and chairmen of college departments (9). This LBDQ technique has not as yet been used in studies of classroom teachers, but there is strong presumptive evidence to suggest that these same two dimensions are of especial significance in the interaction between teachers and students.

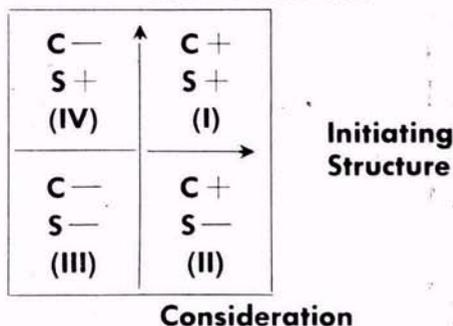
Having developed a practical technique for describing how leaders behave, our next task was to determine the relationship between individuals' scores on these dimensions and their "effectiveness" as leaders. One of Halpin's (4) studies of aircraft commanders shows that the most "effective" commanders are those who score high on *both* dimensions of leader behavior. Similarly, Hemphill's study of 22 departments in a liberal arts college shows that the departments with the best campus reputation for being well-administered were those whose chairmen scored above the average on both leader behavior dimensions. Studies on leadership ideology (5, 6) likewise indicate that "effective" leaders are characterized by high Initiation of Structure and high Consideration. These dimensions may be conceptualized according to the coordinate scheme presented in Figure 1, in which the four quadrants are designated by Roman numerals.

The leaders described in Quadrant I are evaluated as highly "effective,"

whereas those in Quadrant III, whose behavior is ordinarily accompanied by group chaos, are characterized as most "ineffective." The leaders in Quadrant IV are the martinets and the "cold fish" so intent upon getting a job done that they forget that they are dealing with human beings, not cogs in a machine. The individuals described in Quadrant II are also "ineffective" leaders. They may ooze with the milk of human kindness, but this contributes little to "effective" performance unless their Consideration behavior is accompanied by a necessary minimum of Initiating Structure behavior.

The implications of these findings for teachers are obvious. The "effectiveness" of a teacher's behavior as a leader in his classroom will be augmented only to such extent as he increases *both* his Initiation of Structure and his Consideration. The current emphasis in education upon "human relations" and upon the group dynamics approach has developed, in part, as a protest against reactionary, and often even autocratic, leadership styles

Figure 1
A COORDINATE SCHEME FOR CONCEPTUALIZING THE *Initiating Structure* AND *Consideration* DIMENSIONS OF LEADER BEHAVIOR



that have prevailed in many school situations. But in our enthusiasm for this new approach, have we perhaps swung the pendulum too far? In applying "human

relations" principles, we must be sure that we do not overlook the responsibility imposed upon every leader by the institutional realities of the formal institution of which he is a part. The designated leader has a responsibility and, in fact, a contractual obligation to accomplish specified group objectives; and judgments in respect to these goals often are beyond the decision-making purview of the immediate work-group.

At this juncture, therefore, it is imperative to re-examine our ideas about establishing a desirable balance between "human relations" (i.e., Consideration) and Initiating Structure emphases in leader behavior. In education we have properly and quite successfully stressed the importance of maintaining a "democratic" relationship between the teacher and his students. This is good. But let us remember, too, that the primary responsibility of a leader is to lead, and that by doing so he in no way becomes less "democratic." The essence of leading is to Initiate Structure-in-Interaction, and to orient these structures continually toward the solution of group problems and the accomplishment of the goals prescribed for the group. Research indicates that this "Structuring" can be engaged in with no sacrifice of Consideration.

In our opinion, leader behavior characterized by high Initiation of Structure and high Consideration represents the ideal of democratic leadership that we all seek. The advantage of the present approach is that by identifying the components of this leadership style in behavioral terms and by focusing our efforts, as we have, upon the *behavior* of leaders, we are placed in a better position to develop dependable techniques for training teachers as more "effective" leaders.

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science, to gain the habitudes and insights they need to bring an effective and informed intelligence to their forthcoming tasks of citizenship. And, sad as it is to admit it, other negative factors would be related by many.

To state all of this, however, does not suggest to the writer that the picture is totally black. Neither the members of ASCD nor its officers, in short, should put on hair shirts, beat their breasts, and cry "Failure" to all who will listen. Yet at times they seem to want to do this, belaboring themselves because they have not found a magic formula that will solve all problems overnight. This is unfortunate, since it could easily engender a passion to get *something* done.

The basic problems with which ASCD has concerned itself do not lend themselves to each solution, however gifted the membership. No committee or commission, no national, regional or state meeting, will solve these problems within a year or within a decade. Whatever the depth of our understanding of learning, at all chronological and intellectual levels and in relationship to all social and cultural conditions, only the foolhardy would assume that we have the final answers in hand. And so with the projection of curriculum patterns or with our understanding of what it is that marks off effective citizenship. The critical problems that must be faced in education are

recurring problems, problems that do not stay solved for two quite simple reasons: (a) the social conditions under which they arise are not static; and (b) the knowledge we gain is always a springboard to further knowledge.

When thus viewed the educational picture changes and luminous spots appear within what earlier seemed to be total darkness. Curriculum development is a strong interest within the country. Supervisors have taken a further look at their job. More administrators are sensitive to the need to provide professional conditions for the teachers they serve. Many buildings are functional to a degree that seemed impossible to achieve but a decade or so ago. The student, even as he multiplies so rapidly that all facilities grow increasingly inadequate, is treated more and more humanely, with his education becoming increasingly relevant to the life of which he is a part. There is ferment in education, in short, and ASCD has had a share in bringing this about. If it keeps its eye on the ball, remembering that the important determination to be made year by year is the *direction* of movement within education, the Association will be a continuing force for the progressive improvement of education.

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