

Research Article

Leadership Styles of Programme Coordinators of Krishi Vigyan Kendras in North East India as Perceived by the Subject Matter Specialists

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Abstract

A study on the leadership styles of Programme Coordinators of Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) in north east India as perceived by the Subject Matter Specialists (SMSs) was conducted with 76 Subject Matter Specialists drawn from 19 Krishi Vigyan Kendras of the eight north eastern states of India, through a descriptive research design, following a multi-stage, census cum criterion based purposive sampling plan. Assessing the overall leadership styles of the Programme Coordinators of the Krishi Vigyan Kendras and comparing the perceived leadership style strengths of the Programme Coordinators across the north eastern states were the main objectives of the investigation. The study revealed that autocratic task management and impoverished management were the top two dominant leadership styles of the Programme Coordinators of the KVKs in north east India as perceived by the SMSs. The study suggests organising management training programmes for the Programme Coordinators in order to reduce the perceived strength of autocratic style of leadership. Provision for exceptional leadership incentives, creation of a competitive environment, organizing exposure visits, setting realistic targets, administrative support, developing team work environment etc. are some of the suggestions of the study for reducing the perceived strength of the impoverished management leadership style.

Keywords: Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Subject Matter Specialist, perceived leadership style, descriptive research design.

Introduction

Organizations are successful to the extent they are able to get their people working together in achieving the common goals. Such concerted effort demands employees' favourable perception about the organizational atmosphere. It is their perception about their organization that matters more than what the organization really is. One such factor which has been considered to be of paramount importance by different studies and authors is leadership. Organizational leadership has an important effect upon the group's morale, attitude and opinion (Porter *et al*, 1975). Conceptually, leadership is the ability to persuade others to seek defined objectives enthusiastically (Davis, 1967). Leaders play an important role in an organization. A leader's job is to understand the capabilities of subordinates, assign those appropriate tasks, help them to acquire new capabilities, maintain them in high morale and constantly provide situations in which the workers enjoy doing the assigned tasks to them. The leader triggers the power of motivation in subordinate employees and guides them towards goals.

The method and approach of leadership is likely to influence the performance of employees and organizational productivity to a great extent. According to Field and Dubey (1987), leadership style is the process whereby the leader exerts influence and power over subordinates to motivate them to engage in relevant behaviours to achieve organizational goals. Perceived leadership style in the present study was operationalized as the degree of concern for people and production exhibited by the Programme Coordinators (controlling officers) of the KVKs as perceived by the Subject Matter Specialists. After careful deliberation by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture and the Planning Commission and as a follow up of the recommendation, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) appointed a committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mohan Singh Mehta of Seva Mandir, Udaipur in 1973 for formulating the institutional design of Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) for providing vocational training in agriculture.

Krishi Vigyan Kendras (Farm Science Centre), an innovative science based institution, were thus established mainly to impart vocational training to the farmers and field level extension workers. The effectiveness of the KVK was further enhanced by adding the activities related to On-Farm Testing (OFT) and Front-Line Demonstration (FLD) on major agricultural technologies in order to make the training of farmers location specific, need based and resource-oriented. The KVKs as district level technology backstopping mechanism, functions as a team of multidisciplinary experts, called Subject Matter Specialists (SMS), with a Programme Coordinator acting as the head of each KVK. Each KVK comprises of six SMSs, who are drawn from diverse disciplines such as Agronomy, Animal Husbandry, Fishery, Agricultural Extension, Home Science, Plant Protection, Horticulture etc., according to the need of the specific district. They provide direct interaction between farmers and scientist for effective technology dissemination and adoption. Besides, other related works are also expected from them for the benefit of farmers.

The scientific team at each KVK thus becomes the reference and nodal point for expert scientific guidance at the district level for all the line departments. Ultimately, it is the teamwork, rapport, understanding and cohesiveness of the scientific staff of the KVKs, i.e., the SMSs, that determines the effectiveness and achievement of not only the KVKs themselves, but also other line departments of the districts. As such it is imperative that the SMSs find themselves in a productive environment with a desirable motivational climate. Such a climate can only arise when effective leadership is provided by the Programme Coordinators as the head of the KVKs. Against this backdrop; the present investigation was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To assess the overall leadership styles of the Programme Coordinators of the Krishi Vigyan Kendras of north east India as perceived by the Subject Matter Specialists.
2. To compare the perceived leadership style strengths of the Programme Coordinators across the north eastern states.

Materials and methods

Study area and sampling: The study geographically encompassed the eight north eastern states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim. The KVKs selected on the basis of adopted criteria, formed the units of study in the present investigation. A descriptive research design, following an *ex post facto* approach, was followed for the present study. A multi-stage, census cum criterion based purposive sampling plan was adopted for the investigation. Census sampling was done to accommodate all the eight north eastern states of North East India in the study sample.

Through a criterion based purposive sampling plan, it was proposed to include only those KVKs of the region in the sample for investigation, which had completed a minimum of five years of existence prior to data collection. The reason for the same being the fact that it requires some reasonable time for a newly established set-up/organization to evolve its own motivational climate pattern through the interfaces of the organizational structure, leadership patterns, individual traits and role assimilation and performance. Accordingly, as per selection criteria, 19 KVKs of the North Eastern region were included in the study sample. The Subject Matter Specialists (SMSs) of the KVKs were the specific subjects of data collection from the respective KVKs. Following a criterion based purposive sampling plan, it was proposed to include only those SMSs of the selected KVKs, who had completed a minimum of three years of continuous service in the same KVK prior to data collection in order to provide them reasonable time for getting the feel of the motivational climate through role interactions and leadership appreciation. Accordingly, as per selection criteria, 76 responding SMSs from the 19 sample KVKs comprised the actual study sample, out of a theoretical sample size of 89. Table 1 shows the sampling pattern of KVKs and SMSs for inclusion in the study sample from the eight north eastern states.

Measurement of perceived leadership style: The Managerial Grid Scale developed by Blake and Mouton (1964) was used to measure perceived leadership style in the present study. The Managerial Grid Scale measures the leader's concerns for people and for production. The manner in which these two concerns are linked together by the leaders defines how the leader uses the hierarchical position. There are five grid positions which represent the basic assumptions on which leaders base their leadership behaviour. A grid consists of a vertical axis which represents the degree of "concern for people" on a scale of 1 to 9, where 1 depicts the lowest concern and 9 the highest concern for people. The horizontal axis represents degrees of "concern for production" on a scale from 1 to 9, respectively representing the lowest and highest concern for production. Five forms of leadership are identified on the basis of concerns for people and for production. These are presented in Figure 1.

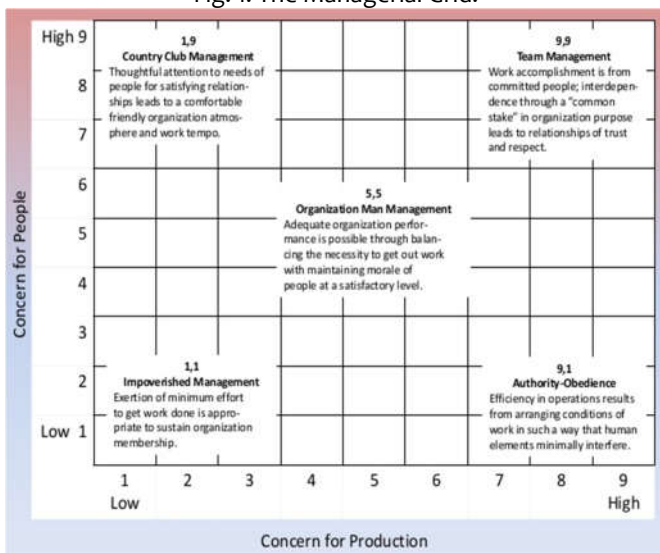
At the lower left corner of the grid is the (1,1) style, referred by many as "*impoverished management*". This style has a minimum concern for production as well as for people. Minimum effort is needed to sustain organizational membership. At the upper left corner is the (1,9) style, frequently referred to as "*country club management*", in which leaders have little or no concern for production but are concerned only for people.

Table 1. Sampling pattern of KVKs and SMSs for inclusion in the study sample.

Sl. No.	State	Number of KVKs sampled	Total strength of SMS	No. of SMS qualifying for inclusion in the study* (theoretical sample size)	No. of SMSs actually responding	Actual sample size from respective state
1.	Arunachal Pradesh	1	04	04	03	03
2.	Assam	5	23	23	23	23
3.	Manipur	3	15	15	12	12
4.	Meghalaya	2	11	11	09	09
5.	Nagaland	3	14	14	12	12
6.	Sikkim	1	05	05	04	04
7.	Tripura	2	08	08	06	06
8.	Mizoram	2	09	09	07	07
Grand total		19	109	89	76	76

*Based on adopted study criteria.

Fig. 1. The Managerial Grid.



Source: Blake and Mouton (1964)

They promote an environment where everyone is relaxed, friendly and happy and no one is concerned about putting forth co-ordinated efforts to accomplish organizational goals. In the lower right corner of the grid is the (9,1) style, often referred to as “autocratic task management”, in which leaders are concerned only with developing an efficient operation and a minimum concern for social, emotional and ego needs of their subordinates. In the upper right corner is the (9,9) style, also referred to as “team management”, wherein leaders’ concern for both people and production is the highest, which leads to interdependence between the leader and subordinates through a “common stake” in the organization’s purpose and to relationship of trust and respect between them. At the centre of the grid is the (5,5) style, which is a “middle-of-the-road” approach, where an adequate amount of both kinds of concern (people and production) is shown by the leader.

The Managerial Grid Scale with 5 descriptive statements, each expressing one type of leadership style, was administered to the respondents on a five point continuum, ranging from rank I to rank V, through rank II, III and IV. The scores assigned to these ranking categories were 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1. Thus, the possible score which a respondent can get for each of the five leadership styles ranged between 1 and 5.

Data collection and analysis: Data collection for the investigation was done with the help of a pretested, structured, mailed research questionnaire, which was dispatched to all the sample respondents. Appropriate statistical measures were used to analyse and interpret the collected data.

Results and discussion

1. Overall leadership styles of the Programme Coordinators: Data presented in Table 2 depicts the mean scores and percentage distribution of the overall perceived leadership styles of the Programme Coordinators of the KVKs. As indicated by Table 2, the autocratic task management leadership style was perceived to be more prevalent over others, as depicted by the converted percentage figure of 27.51%. It was followed by impoverished management style (22.86%) and middle-of-the road style (22.10%). While team management leadership style accounted for 15.12% of the total obtained scores, only 12.38% was accounted for by country club management style. The mean score strengths against these five perceived leadership styles also reflected strengths proportionate to their percentage conversions. By and large it can be summarized that autocratic task management and impoverished management were the top two dominant leadership styles of the Programme Coordinators of the KVKs in north east India as perceived by the SMSs. Unfortunately from a management point of view, both of them constitute undesirable styles of leadership in the context of organizational efficiency and productivity.

Table 2. Mean scores and percentage distribution of overall perceived leadership style (N= 76).

Perceived Leadership Style	Ranks					Summated scores (Σ Frequency x weightage)	Mean score (Summated score/N)	Percentage
	I (5)	II (4)	III (3)	IV (2)	V (1)			
Team management	02	09	13	31	21	168	2.21	15.12%
Autocratic task management	34	22	10	08	02	306	4.02	27.51%
Middle-of-the-road	12	17	29	13	05	246	3.23	22.10%
Country club management	01	07	11	15	42	138	1.81	12.38%
Impoverished management	13	21	27	09	06	254	3.34	22.86%
Grand total						1112	14.61	100%

*Figures in parentheses indicate rank weightage.

Table 3. State wise comparison of mean perceived leadership style strengths (N= 76).

States	Mean score based perceived leadership style strengths				
	Team Management	Autocratic	Middle-of-the-road	Country Club	Impoverished
Arunachal Pradesh	2.00	4.00	4.00*	1.66	5.00**
Assam	2.00	4.21*	2.60	1.39	3.21
Manipur	2.00	4.16*	4.08*	2.58*	3.00
Meghalaya	2.77*	4.44*	2.77	1.11	4.77*
Nagaland	1.50	3.91	4.50**	2.08*	3.08
Sikkim	4.00**	4.75**	2.00	1.50	2.75
Tripura	3.33*	3.33	2.16	3.66**	4.00*
Mizoram	1.86	3.00	3.57*	1.00	2.00
Overall	2.21	4.02	3.23	1.81	3.34

**Highest among the states; *Mean score strengths higher than the overall for the region.

2. Comparison of the perceived leadership style strengths of the Programme Coordinators across the north eastern states

The data related to the state wise comparison of mean perceived leadership style strengths of the Programme Coordinators of the eight north eastern states are presented in Table 3. A perusal of the data on Table 3 reveals that in case of team management leadership style, the highest perceived strength was in case of Sikkim (4.00) followed by Tripura (3.33) and Meghalaya (2.77). These three states had perceived team management style strengths higher than the overall for the region (2.21). On the other hand, with a strength score of 1.50, Nagaland recorded the lowest perceived strength of team management leadership style. In addition, the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur and Mizoram had strengths lower than the overall for the region. In case of autocratic task management leadership style, the highest perceived strength was observed in the state of Sikkim (4.75), followed by Meghalaya (4.44), Assam (4.21) and Manipur (4.16), all of which had scores higher than the overall for the region (4.02). The states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Tripura and Mizoram had scores lower than the overall for the region.

A glance at the Table 3 shows that the state of Nagaland had the highest perceived strength in respect of middle-of-the-road leadership style, with a score of 4.50, followed by Manipur (4.08), Arunachal Pradesh (4.00) and Mizoram (3.57), all of which had score strengths higher than the overall for the region (3.23). On the other hand, the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Tripura had perceived strengths lower than the overall for the region. As the Table 3 depicts, the highest perceived strength of country club management leadership style was observed in Tripura (3.66), followed by Manipur (2.58) and Nagaland (2.08). These states had strength scores higher than the overall for the region (1.81). The states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Mizoram had perceived strength scores lower than the overall for the region. In respect of impoverished management leadership style, Arunachal Pradesh recorded the highest perceived strength, with a score of 5.00, followed closely by Meghalaya (4.77) and Tripura (4.00), all of whom had strengths higher than the overall for the region. The other five states of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim and Mizoram had strengths lower than the regional overall.

Conclusion

1. An appraisal of the leadership styles of the Programme Coordinators of the KVKs of the eight north eastern states of India, as perceived by the SMSs of the KVKs, highlights that the autocratic task management leadership style was perceived to be more prevalent over others in the KVKs of the region. An autocratic style of management would naturally give rise to a feeling of control, as subordinates are bound by directions and orders, with little room for autonomy and flexibility.
2. Since on many occasions, unidirectional orders and directions have to be complied with without having required guidance, SMSs develop a tendency and habit of looking for guidance from the Programme Coordinators, thereby giving rise to a feeling of dependency in the long run.
3. From a management perspective, the ideal leadership style would be that of team management, in order to achieve organizational goals. Unfortunately, only about 15% of the total obtained scores accounted for this leadership style, presenting a situation where a lot of shift in terms of leadership style in the KVKs would be called for.
4. A logical intervention of reducing the autocratic style of leadership may be to organise management training programmes for the Programme Coordinators, which is till now missing in the region. Such a training agenda should incorporate dimensions such as leadership theories, team building, work motivation, personnel management, participatory planning etc., which would address the negative fallouts of autocratic functioning style.
5. The study also revealed an impoverished management style of the Programme Coordinators of the region as the second most dominant leadership style. Such a style would exhibit little concern for both people and production. In order to gear up such leadership styles, the following interventions may be suggested:
 - Provision for exceptional leadership incentives to the Programme Coordinators displaying impeccable management credentials.
 - In order to inculcate a culture of target fulfillment and continual striving for excellence, creation of a competitive environment may be considered.
 - Organizing exposure visits for the Programme Coordinators of the region, especially those labeled as impoverished management leaders, can act as an eye opener and stimulate such Programme Coordinators to perform better.
 - Apart from the above, setting realistic targets, administrative support, developing team work environment and undertaking management training programmes for the Programme Coordinators as described in the previous point would also contribute to reducing the impoverished management leadership style in the KVKs of the region and increase the strength of the team management leadership style.

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