# Leading to Diversity Management: Case of Community School Head-Teacher's Style in Nepal

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## Abstract

*This study aimed to explore the leadership style of head teacher for the effective diversity management and investigate underlying assumption for respecting difference when act in diversity management the theoretical foundation for this underlying study was constructivist/interpretive the research method adopted for this study was qualitative along with hermeneutics phenomenology. Purposively, four head teachers from rural community schools of Dhankuta District were selected as participant. The participant head teacher were leading schools containing more than four diversities such as age, caste, gender, ethnicity. Profound interview was taken via interview guidelines from the participants based upon the experience in leadership style. Data analysis revealed with the themes of collaboration from the in depth interview and observing an activity of head teacher and services. From the interview protocol the responses had been transcribed and themes were organized to obtain main theme. The major results had been deduced from the main theme. Respect to culture, treating with caste and gender, minorities' advocacy and disability management were the prominent leadership strategies for the succession of school leadership. These strategies are more supportive to diversity management and valuable to conceive as appropriate styles for head teacher to his successful tenure.*

**Keywords**: Diversity, Minority, Organization, Advocacy, Disability, School

## 1. Introduction

Nepal is composed of bundle of diversity regarding to caste, age, gender, disability, religion, culture, geographical topography, sexual orientation, political ideology, socio-economic status etc. The similar dimension of diversity is reflected in Nepalese classroom. There is a huge challenge in the promotion of quality education in Nepalese School (Sherpa et al., 2020). The school leader is also facing the challenges of diversity to enhance the effective leadership tenure (Hoque et al., 2011). In the present changed context of Nepal, how the teacher define the characteristic of diversity leader in the effective school management that promotes and ensures the quality education in Nepal. As far, the satisfaction rate of service holder is gradually degrading due to the deformation of quality in service delivery system.

Thus, head teacher plays a key role as the primary leader of a school and will greatly influence all aspects of the functions of the school with their behaviors, personal characteristics, and also biases (Kladifko and Li, 2011). Principal's leadership style has more influence over many aspects of school's functions (Hina Munir et al., 2020). There are many

differences in school such as gender, caste, religion, language and disability etc. I will be specifically looking at principal leadership style in the diversity management of gender, language and disability. In order to accomplish this, I will examine head teachers perceptions and leadership experience on diversity management that may lead to enhance the goal of community school. This will begin with an analysis of how the administrator's leadership style impacts the school climate and creates positive academic environment for all stakeholders (teachers, students, parents) at that school (Nordberg, 2010).

The concept of diversity emphasizes language, disability, race, gender, Sexual orientation and ethnicity in the strict sense; it refers to all of the individual differences among people in a broader sense (Lewis D, 2000). According to Nkomo et al., (1999), the diversity is not only a situation to describe with just race or gender, but it also includes differences such as age, personal or organizational background, training, personality, lifestyle, sexual preference, geographical origin and period of office, and position in the organization (Cletus et al., 2018). Individual differences may be to the advantage or disadvantage of the organization in line with stereotypes or prejudices of directors or employees for individuals (Baraily, 2021). It is closely related with standpoints of employees and directors towards diversity whose differences are positive or negative (Manaseh, 2016). Those who take a bright view of diversity think that differences are essential for social development, acknowledging that they are natural. They are of the point that refers social advantage to live in cooperation and harmony by maintaining and supporting diversity (Sherpa, 2020). On the contrary, those who take a dim view of diversity are of the opinion that differences will impair the integral structure of state, society and result in conflicts and that problem will be eliminated through assimilation of unaccepted difference (Polat et al., 2017).

Considering the fact that education institutions are one of the organizations where the diversities are at maximum level, such diversities in the organizations are required to be addressed to improve the quality of the education, increase the commitment of the teachers to the school (Crow & Weindling, 2010) . In other words, it is required to lead the diversities by considering them as an opportunity rather than managing them by perceiving them as a problem. At this point, the responsibility lies with the education leader because education leader takes on a task to direct such diversities in the school to the intended target (Southworth, 2002). In this sense, the understanding of the teachers from the leadership of the diversities and determination of the features of the diversities in their perspective are important for leading the way for the education leader (Kabeta et al., 2013).

## 1.1 Leadership style for managing diversity

This refers to the capability of leader with genuine efficiency for the succession in global market with respect to innovative management, dedicated workforce and inspirational leadership. To fulfill such type of objectives, organization need talented and enthusiastic and visionary leader. For making better organization, the leader need to hire competent workers from diverse background with full of dedication and allegiance within organization (Manna, 2008).

Likewise, the head teacher of school needs to play pivotal role for the betterment of school with his great effort. The diverse characteristic of school seek to have different goal and management styles, decision making styles, communication and coordination styles (Jiang et al., 2010).The successful leader can modify the environment with his leadership competencies by managing a big diversity within school (Hernez-Broome and Hughes, 2004).The difference existed in school have the different views and insight for running organization (Busine & Watt, 2005). By the distributive leadership style, the leader can accumulate verities of resource and knowledge to drive organization (Busine and Watt, 2005).

This study focuses on leadership styles of head teacher in diversity management and how perceptions head teacher hold of such leadership styles impact in diversity management for the upgrading of school. The head teacher, as the leader of the school, can significantly influence the attitudes of the staff and how the school functions with his or her attitudes and behaviors (Gause, 2011). This research will concentrate on how the stakeholders perceive their head teacher's leadership style in diversity management that are scattered in school. The particular head teachers' leadership behaviors that enhance teachers' job satisfaction, organization goal and the differences in leadership style in diversity management (Solangi, 2017).

In the current Nepalese education system, under MOE, Nepal, head teachers are required to play a crucial role in providing effective leadership for successful outcomes. Head teachers are playing critical role as change agents in creating positive working environment for teachers and enhancing student motivation for the better achievement of institutional goal (Sherpa et al., 2020).

It is trusted that perceptions of head teacher on effective leadership styles are critical because teachers and head teacher work together and teachers and other staffs are directly affected by the leadership style of head teacher. It is hoped that the findings of this study will be helpful for school leaders to run smoothly by addressing diversity issues and to adopt the essential strategies for uplifting a progress of school. The major findings can back up the policy maker for enriching supervision and monitoring mechanism that enhance efficiency of teachers and administrators.

## 1.2 Research Question

What are the perceptions of head teacher about leadership style on diversity management?

What are the underlying assumptions of head teacher for respecting differences when they talk about diversity management?

What are the ways of effective leadership style for diversity management within school?

## 1.3 Literature Review

In this section, how the diversity is conceptualized to reflect the feature of work force within school is discussed in thematic way. This also consists of theoretical orientation that back up implication and guidelines for the ongoing research.

## 1.4 Diversity management

The feature of difference that associates with human world such as age, ethnicity, caste, gender, sexual orientation, cognitive and physical abilities that cannot be changed within school accompanies with diversity (Yang and Konrad, 2011). Being the school, as miniature of society, the configuration of all types of difference is illuminating in the class room. So, classroom is suitable place for the existence of big diversities that reflects their individual characteristic.

The strategic practice to manage difference in school including struggle against stereotype, prejudice and different features of discrimination because of individual's feelings and assumption relates with diversity management (Polat et al., 2017). It is helpful for enhancing benefit and reduces the barrier of different opinion, behavior and attitude of head teacher in school (Veysel, 2014).

The rationale of leadership in diversity management is to create tolerance based climate and mutual understanding within individual having demographic, cultural and social difference within school (Ozbilgin et al., 2013). This increases motivation and performance by setting common culture. In school there is a lot of diversity in both student and teacher. The leadership style of head teacher includes justice, equity and conflict management in school (Rink and Ellemers, 2007). With the diversity management skill, he is able to achieve the goal of school and make the student preparing for life under their interest and abilities and

contribute to their personal development (Danullis, 2004). Increasing teacher motivation and performance with the positive school climate and culture is major skill for head teacher (Polat et al., 2017). Effective guidance and diversity skill of head teacher contribute to school effectiveness and affects to communication, performance and productivity (Neale et al., 1999).

Many educational researches have shown that good diversity management skills can create a world of difference in the efficiency and performance of the School. According to the view of Chen and Van Velsor (1996) behavioral complexity and leader-member exchange theories consists of the structure of leadership in diversity management along with leadership oriented perspective. According to the behavioral complexity theory, qualified leader displays innovative, mediating, productive, directive, regulative, reflective, facilitative and consultative behaviors wherever is appropriate (Jawadi, 2013). Due to the socio cultural differences of individuals within the organization, the technical skills, knowledge and capabilities of leader might be varied. In this regard, the leader also has to display different behaviors so that the needs and expectations of individuals with several organizational differences are fulfilled (Polat et al., 2017).

According to Dreachslin (1999) diversity leadership is the strategy of creating sensitivity in the employees and clients against demographic variables and changing social attitudes. Diversity leadership requires respecting differences rather than putting up with differences and valuing them, thereby contributing opportunities instead of raising difficulties (Manaseh, 2016). The input for success in diversity leadership is to have an elastic frame of mind (Barbuto and Gifford, 2012). If a leader behaves in a fair, respectful and sensitive manner to all of the employees, team spirit to ensure fulfillment of difficult, final objectives by the organization, would have been supported (Darden 2003).

Diversity leadership and behavioral complexity model are in a natural harmony since complexity is inevitably connected to diversity (Buttner et al., 2006). When the complexity model is associated with social identities within the organization, it can be applied to diversity leadership (Chen and Van Velsor, 1996). As for the leader-member exchange theory, it conceptualizes the interaction as a process between the leader and follower (Winkler, 2010). The theory focuses on vertical relations between a superior and subordinate, and sets forth that the leader will not be able to approach all of the subordinates with the same leadership style as the time, resource or power is limited in the organizations (Marvasti, 2018). With reference to leader member exchange theory, an efficient leadership process emerges when the leader and followers could have developed a mature relationship (Barbuto and Gifford, 2012). Thus, both parties can utilize many advantages brought by such relation and partnership (Javadi et al., 2013).

## 1.5 Theoretical Framing of the Study

This study was framed on the contingency leadership theory, style and behavior theory and process leadership theory conducted this study following the idea of leadership style of head teacher in the diversity management. These theories allow head teacher to explore the effective leadership style in diversity management. From this theory I found the framework to be very important in advancing the diversity leadership characteristic of head teacher in community school of Nepal.

## 1.6 Contingency leadership theory

This theory focuses in the sense that there is no single right way to lead the followers. It depends on quality and situation of follower and other variables. The internal and external dimension of environment can influence to leader for adaptation in particular situation (Fiedler, 2015). According to this theory leader need to focus on leader subordinate relationship. It also delineates that subordinate plays vital role in maintaining relationship. It creates to the significance of dynamics of subordinate. This theory purposes the style of

leadership should be accorded with the maturity of subordinates (Wakabi, 2016).This theory also highlights that leaders should be effective and be able to adapt in situation and the leadership style should be changed into task oriented and relationship oriented.

## 1.7 Style and Behavior Leadership theory

It focuses in the sense that like one cap does not fit all heads. This means one style cannot be effective in all situations (Jago, 1982). This theory delineates with three theories, democratic which gives satisfaction, creativity and motivation to the workers. Autocratic leadership style seeks on greater quantity of output and makes decision in the absence of subordinates (Underdal, 1994). Laissez faire leadership style is considered to be relevant with highly skilled and motivated people who were excellent in the past.

## 1.8 Process leadership theory

Leadership theory guided by the process refers to process leadership. This include servant leadership, learning organization, principal centered leadership and charismatic leadership ( Nawaz and Khan, 2016). Servant leader focuses on anxiety of follower and leader sympathize with them take care of and nurture them. This type of leadership focuses on the needs of follower and helps them to become more autonomous freer and knowledgeable (DeMatthews, 2014). This type of leader is concerned with the have-nots and recognizes them as equal (Greenleaf et al., 1996).The process leadership theory suggest that the work of leaders is to contribute to the well-being of others with a focus on some form of social responsibility (Tourish, 2014).

This study has underpinned by the construct of above theory in the leadership style of head teacher in diversity management. The narratives of the head teacher are shaped by the theoretical lenses of contingency, style and behavior and process leadership theory.

## 2. Methodology

This study has adopted qualitative research in which the interpretative phenomenology has embodied as a research methods which intends to dig out lived experiences of participants which construct the shared meaning of similar experiences (Creswell et al., 2006). This study embraces multiple realities as ontological basis and interaction and perception of participant as epistemological consideration. Four head teacher of rural community school from Dhankuta district had been selected purposively as participants. The data had been collected by in depth interview with participant and participant observation in the respective school. Firstly, I made telephone call to all participants and requested to manage time for interaction. In the beginning of meeting, the participant tried to question about my mission. As soon I clarified about my study and dropped my curiosity. The participant gave positive response while I talked about my purpose to study in diversity management. I talked about the diversity management strategies perceived by participant in the diversity management embedded in respective school. I tried to dig out the experience and feeling of participant in the school for diversity management by engaging with their involvement. Regarding to the overcome of ethical dilemma, the participants were taken informed consent. In-depth interviews and participant observation were conducted for relevant information. Interviews with the participants were recorded by audio recorder. Recorded interviews responses were transcribed as verbatim and developed code. Similar codes were organized to generate theme. The similar themes were organized as a main theme of the study. Themes were illustrated on the basis of ground data and they were compared and contrasted with data to data and data to literature to draw the final conclusion.

## 2.1 Ethical Consideration

Before this study begin, I Submitted application of approval to the head teacher of school in the research site. I requested informed consent from the participant who participated in research. Before conducting the interview I explained the purpose of study and procedure to be adopted. The data was treated with strong measure of confidentiality. In this study I

engaged in the role of researcher and contextual participant was participating in situation specific role as educator but in the same time I was observing as researcher. The participants were informed that they were not obliged to participate in the research and they could withdraw from the research any time if they wished. There with draw would not result into any negative interpretation.

## 3. Result and Discussion

This portion consists of outcomes from the information and its major connection with theories and research question which intersects the aim of study. This also constitutes the construct of major theory blending with research objectives linking with investigator's own interpretation .in running through this section the version of head teacher are interpreted by transcription and analyzed with theoretical construct underlying with appropriate them regarding to diversity management.

### 3.1 Respect to culture

There is lot of differences to be addressed within school that represents the common features of organization. The teacher, students and other non-teaching staff are representing the difference in culture in society. The creating of welcoming environment within school recommends to the wonderful efficacy of head teacher for the school leadership (Hoque et al., 2011). The school is platform of miniature of society where the people are representing the norms of differences. In the school all the factors are being equally valued and treated with equal manner so that the stake holder feels proud and entertain with cross cultural activity. Regarding to this matter, head teacher H1 said as,

> In my school, the teaching and non-teaching staff is coming from diverse culture. The norms, values, attitude, belief system are also different on the basis of their respective locality. Being as head teacher, I equally respect all culture, norms and values. In every cultural festival of diverse people, our school decided to close school as local leave. Our schools allow inculcating cultural events at extracurricular activity.

From the above assertion, the Nepalese classroom is composed of different type of diversity such as caste, ethnicity, ritual etc. The norms and values of every community are equally valued by head teacher by using the construct of style and behavior leadership theory, the leadership style depends on context and behavior. According to situation and context, leadership style needs to be transformed to give value for all differences. The diversity dimension collectively role to the significant development of institution. If the diversity parameters of school are profoundly addressed by the head teacher, the organization goal will be perfectly achieved and hence reflects the effective leadership.

### 3.2 Treating with caste

Caste based discrimination is still existing in Nepal especially in rural areas however, it is diluting in the urban areas. The constitution has promulgated the every citizen has equal right to be free without any discrimination. But in the poor implementation of laws some discriminatory events have been occurred in the society. In this relation head teacher H2 asserted as

> School is platform for developing culture and creating empowerment for liberation. In school each and every person acquire self-enlighten and illuminated by education. In my school, students are coming from Dalit and janajati community. All types of students get equal opportunity to be educated in child friendly environment. In my school, I have appointed office boy from Dalit community and almost teacher are from Janajati and Dalit. I have given an emphasis to appoint teacher from backward community preferring to the local body.

From above assertion, it is clear that; head teacher is launching non-discriminatory behavior in school. It is seen that head teacher is positive about the development of disadvantaged and marginalized people from the side of school. From the statement of head

teacher, the school needs to initiate the foundation of equitable society. The school can lead for the formation of just society by delivering equal opportunity to participate in school as teaching or non-teaching staff.

By accepting the above premises the head teacher H3 emphasized as

> My school is located in rural areas where most of the residents are Brahmin and Kshetri. The teaching and non-teaching staffs are mostly from such community. Less number of Dalit students are reading in school by nominating as Lamichhane, Paudel, Rishal, Mohora, Bogati which are same as Brahmin decides to distribute Dalit scholarship by identifying their caste from birth certificate with respective ancestors.

> In above statement, Dalit are dominating from so called upper caste, and they are

identified as small caste. The ritual, cultural norms and values are same, their religions are also same but they are categorized as their occupation in some extent of time by autocratic emperor. In Veda there is no evidence of caste. Only the pit politician is doing politics in the issue of caste to obstruct the social harmony. According to process leadership theory, head teacher need to address the voice of so called lower caste employer within school. In the sense that head teacher, being as leader need to become agent of social transformation despite any discrimination within society

## 3.3 Treating with gender

In any organization, difference on the basis of gender is beautiful ornament to proceed ahead in the course of development. Many researchers have shown that gender disparity makes institution developing better way in the course of goal achievement. The institutional efficacy has been developed with the joint effort male and female.

Regarding on this matter, head teacher H3 urged as

> In my school, total teaching staffs are 13 with 6 male teachers and 7 female teachers. Almost ladies teacher are engaging in primary level. In the work division, those who are able to teach in higher level, they have given class in higher grade on the basis of their interest. In every activity of school male and female teacher are equally participated to accomplish. The male and female teacher is being equally treated along with beneficiaries.

> Form the above statement, gender difference is one the significant feature of

organization. The head teacher require to address the gender inequality which in induced from the society by supplying addition benefit because addressing difference keep organization progressing ahead. By using an insight of the contingent leadership theory, head teacher of community school need to motivate subordinate with the provision of benefit. This practice of leadership assists to strengthening new ideas and insight for quality enhancement.

By accepting the same argument, head teacher H4 said as

> In my school, the number of male teachers is more than female teacher. The male teachers are lazy and they argue about politics only. The male teacher is not dedicated and thinks teaching profession are taken as simple and not earnable. They think, teaching profession is limited to little money and time consuming profession. The female teacher are dedicated and more accountable with organization goal have managed some benefit for those who accomplish better performance at the end of academic session. In this provision, female teacher occupies such position.

> In the above statement, the male teachers not all are satisfying their job, their intention

is to earn more money by additional job. The head teacher has managed motivation for professional development but most of them do not perceive. By contingent leadership theory, the faculties are treated on the basis of their contribution. Those who are dedicated for the organization need to be provided additional facilities to promote their momentum. The leader manage motivation for teacher but almost female deserve such position.

### 3.4 Advocacy of minorities

Advocacy pertains to acquire change in legislation, school policy structure and practice of organization governmental and intra-school framework. It can promote existing minority rights and extend them to respond them to new forms of discrimination and indignity (Astramovich and Harris, 2007).

Minority rights advocacy includes capacity building as non-dominant minorities (disability, language, and ethnicity) which are politically marginalized and economically deprived. Solidarity and additional support are essential to repertoire social justice within organization. It needs more collaborative and participatory environment within organization and it emphasizes capacity building of staffs and support and strengthens grassroots organization.

In this regard head teacher H1 urged that

> In my school, most of the students are coming from backward, minority, disadvantaged community where awareness is lacking behind. I feel somehow difficult to guide the teacher to advocate about the minorities due to the different political ideology. These ideologies are reflecting different thought about the ruling agencies. Some staffs are immersed to the conventional thought which cannot be transformed easily.

In the above assertion, there is diversity of thought which impedes smooth development of institution. The monitoring system and legal boundaries are unable to limit their ill sighted behavior due to the constitutional provision. Style and behavior theory asserts that head teacher should not treat to all in the same way. The teachers are inspired by the diversity leader to treat differently for the diverse characteristic within school. It is clear that the teacher need to obey the rules and regulation of school under the legal provision within school boundary as being the government employee. The ultimate goal of all staff needs to be oriented to the mission of school. Head teacher requires ensuring inclusive environment within school by addressing the differences.

By accepting the same argument as above, head teacher H2 highlighted as

> In my school, I advise to all staffs to build framework for ensuring fairness and preferring to the differences manage scholarship for the students who are from marginalized community and provide benefit for them who are back warded. In the beginning of academic session, I initiate to run awareness program about education in the community who are marginalized by offering subsidy.

By the above argument, it can be considered that, head teacher is intending to reduce the parity in educational equality with the help of awareness program and emphasize in the empowerment of marginalized people

### 3.5 Disability management

The management of disability in school within and out the school is one of major challenges in the educational prospective. In the contemporary situation of community school, physical infrastructure is unpleasant for children with disability.

In such context, head teacher H3 said as,

> In my school, old building are not disable friendly and classroom are small. Before earthquake the students had kept in such class, the children with physical disability felt problem event with furniture .after earthquake, new buildings have been made with disable friendly structure like ramp and adequate space for moving wheel chair in the classroom.

By the above statement, in the beginning the institution was unable to set up disable friendly infrastructure due to the various reasons. The heart of effective learning environment is to set up child friendly class room such as adequate space, furniture, visible class room, echo free class etc. in crossing thorough the process leadership theory along servant leader,

the head teacher need to inspire teacher for addressing need and interest of students. The children friendly environment is highly appreciated for children with disability. In the present situation, the infrastructure is made in such way that every child can entertain with learning.

In the favor of above premises, head teacher H4 asserted as,

> A teacher with low vision is associated with teaching staff in my school. He has done graduation in Nepali. He is provided his subject to teach in secondary level by managing large printed material in the class room. The furniture are arranged nearby to him so that he could contact every student comfortably.

From the above statement it is clear that, the effective leadership can reflect his leadership momentum in every aspect within organization either in teaching and non-teaching staff for their comfort. These tasks can motivate the workers to enrich their capability and drop the potentiality for achieving the organization goal. By using the insight of servant leadership theory, the head teachers need to treat the teacher according to their interest so that they could contribute with maximum effort.

## 4. Conclusion

Due to the rapid changes in economic, social, political and technological domains, the situation of people and organizations are promoting for tackling with such change (Polat et al., 2017). These challenges require organizational leader to have information about many fields and make optimal use of human resources as well as other resources in order to be able to ensure organizational efficiency. In this context, it can be said that the success of school is related to leading the stakeholder in the line of institutional goal willingly.

The diversity within organization embraces positive difference that needs to be addressed for the betterment of organization (D'Netto et al., 2014). In the principle assumption of democratic, situational and transactional leadership theory, the sustainable address of deference within school enhances the innate power of stake holder that is milestone for the carrier of organization. Diversity is not a problem, which is required to be managed; on the contrary, it is an opportunity for individuals with cultural, racial and ethnic differences to reveal their creativity with the help of a diversity leader (Syed and Ozbilgin, 2009). In this regard, head teachers require respecting all the difference in a diversity friendly manner and lead them in a fair and efficient way. Thus, the head teachers will be used to form of the situational leadership style, and this will be done in a democratic and positive way (Vroom and Jago, 2007). Good collaboration among administrators demonstrates their leadership skills to manage the diversity in school (Rink and Ellemers, 2007).

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