Personality as a Determinant of the Functioning Styles of School Principals

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Abstract-   This paper aims to identify the impact of varied personality traits of school principals on the performance of their roles. The four styles of personalities which dictate underlying individual differences are Choleric, Sanguine, Phlegmatic and Melancholic. Each personality style has its own values and expectations. Therefore, principals with different interests, abilities and special personality characteristics perform their roles differently which affects the performance of the school.

Keywords- Personality, Choleric, Sanguine, Melancholic, Phlegmatic, Principals, Leadership, Temperaments

I. INTRODUCTION

In an educational institution, a principal is the main agent in the promotion of school effectiveness. He/she is the determinant of success and progress in school education. A principal is not only responsible for the provision of school programs and a curriculum, but also for the development and enhancement of the accountability of student success. The roles and duties undertaken by Principals are also, to some extent, affected by their own personalities, as every principal has his/her own unique way to handle different situations. Thus, it is extremely important to understand in what manner different personality characteristics of principals affect the overall management and performance of the school.

II. PERSONALITY

The word personality stems from the Latin word *persona*, which refers to a theatrical mask worn by performers in order to either project different roles or disguise their identities. As tough as it is to exactly define 'personality', numerous philosophers and psychologists have tried to give reasonable definitions to this complex word.

Owuamanam and Owuamanam (2002) define personality as "*the attributes of the individual which make him unique and different from other individuals*".

Klein (2002) states, "personality is *an individual's characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling, and behaving*".

Oladele (2004) has opined that personality is "*the unique and distinctive characteristics which set a person apart from another*".

Warren (2002) has concluded that personality should include "*how a person acts, the impression that a person creates in others, and the person's typical patterns of behaviour*".

Thus, 'Personality', in the general sense of the word, can be understood as an aggregate of certain distinctive patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours that make a person unique. In others words, it is what makes you, you!

With this common understanding of what is a personality, different psychologists have been able to propose various theories of personality. Some examples of such theories include Sigmund Freud's Psychodynamic Theory of Personality, Temperament Theory of Personality, Eysenck's Personality Theory, Allport's Trait Theory etc. These theories have been of great help to gain a deep and a rich understanding of the characteristics that make each one of us unique. While some of these theories attempt to deal with a particular domain of personality, other theories attempt to elucidate the concept of personality in a much broader manner.

The combined work of these researchers shows that personality is formed from a number of different sources and it is not limited to:

- Genetics (the way one is born);
- Environment (his/her life experiences); and
- Context (situations encountered).

Temperament Theory of Personality

It was Hippocrates' Theory of Humorism, which laid the foundation for the study of personality. This theory argued that personality traits are based on four separate temperaments associated with four fluids or "humors" of the body. This created inborn tendencies that cause major underlying individual differences in personality. These differences could then largely be classified into four styles of personalities, which are based on classifications of human behaviour in four dimensions:

- Feeling – learn through personal involvement
- Thinking- learn through logic, ideas and concepts
- Watching – observe and use caution to obtain results
- Doing – change situations and inspire others to obtain results

The four styles of personalities based on these four dimensions are as follows:

1. Choleric -An outgoing, task-oriented, personality that is quick to act

2. Sanguine -An outgoing, people-oriented, personality that is quick to act

3. Phlegmatic -A reserved, people-oriented, personality that is slow to act

4. Melancholic –A reserved, task-oriented, personality that is slow to act

Other key findings from the collective work of researchers conclude the following about the four personality styles:

- All styles have, in some way or another, value in human society and no specific style can be said to be inherently superior to the other.

- Everyone is a mixture of the four personality styles. We show elements of these four personality styles in our regular interactions with the environment (the diverse people and circumstances that we encounter). In spite of the fact that we're a mixture of these four personality-styles, most of us have a

dominant style (from amongst the four) that we show more frequently than the rest of the three styles when we interact with our surroundings.

- It takes a lot less effort to operate from one's preferred personality-style. Further, it is argued that it rather takes a lot more effort and energy to operate from the rest of the personality-styles that are used less often.

- Each and every personality style brings with it its very own set of values and expectations. Since these values and expectations differ from person to person, they often act as the source of most conflicts that one experiences in his personal life or workplace.

Wundt suggested a better description of personality by using two major axes: emotional/non-emotional and changeable/unchangeable. The first axis separated strong from weak emotions (the melancholic and choleric temperaments from the phlegmatic and sanguine). The second axis divided the changeable temperaments (choleric and sanguine) from the unchangeable ones (melancholic and phlegmatic).
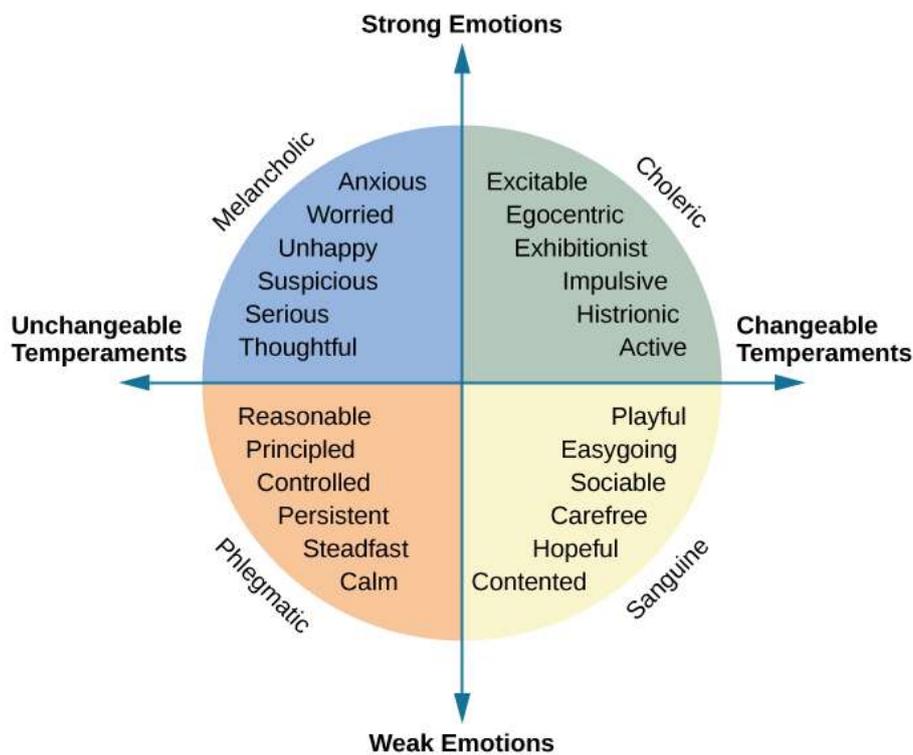

Figure 1.   Description of Personality at two axis

The proto-psychological theory "Four temperaments" states that there are four fundamental personality types-

2.1 Sanguine Personality Type –

Positive traits of people with sanguine type of personality are that they are confident, happy, and relaxed. They love adventures and take high risks. These people are highly resourceful and have great artistic abilities. They see excitement in each experience and repeat the flavour of every occasion in colourful descriptions. One of their significant negative traits is that these people are not good at tolerating unconcerned behaviour and seek amusement. Some of their main characteristics are:

- Appealing Personality

- Talkative and Storyteller
- Enthusiastic and Expressive
- Curious
- Creative and Colourful
- Inspires and Charms others

2.2 Phlegmatic Personality Type –

Some of the positive traits of people with phlegmatic personality type are that they believe in interpersonal harmony and close relationships. It is the closest there is to being a balanced person: one who does not function in the extremes or excesses of life, but walks solidly down the middle road, avoiding conflict and decision on either side. They sustain their relationships with old pals, distant relatives, and even neighbours. Further, they try to mediate conflicts between others to re-establish peace and harmony. They do not call attention to them, and silently do what is expected of them without looking for credit. One of their most significant adverse traits is that they procrastinate and usually tend to evade engagements.

Some of their main characteristics are:

- Low key personality
- Patient – well balanced
- Happily reconciled to life
- Mediates problems
- Good listener
- Managerial ability

2.3 Choleric Personality Type –

Positive traits of people with choleric personality are that they are very sharp, logical, and sound. They envision an impossible dream and aim to reach the unreachable star. A person with pure choleric temperament focuses on achieving goals and meaningful discussions. They can communicate flexibly with people, and they know everything will turn out all right- as long as they are in charge. However, some of their negative traits are that they are generally not very good friends or believe in being social. They have distaste for small talk and ideally want to spend time with people who have related professional interests.

Some of their main characteristics are:

- Born Leader
- Strong willed and Decisive
- Goal Oriented
- Organizes Well
  Has little need for friends
- Excels in Emergencies

2.4 Melancholic Personality Type – People with a melancholic personality have a love for traditional things and affection for their families and friends. They appear to be thinking deeply. They are people who are serious of purpose, dedicated to order and organization, and appreciative of beauty and intelligence. They don't dash off in search of excitement but analyse the best plan for their lives. They are concerned with the societal interests, and seek to contribute to the cause and welfare of the community. Being extremely orderly and accurate, melancholic people are fantastic people managers. Negative traits of people with such personality type are that they do not look for innovation and exploration and this fear of taking the risks leads them to take wrong decisions.

Some of their main characteristics are:

- Deep, Thoughtful and Analytical
- Serious and Purposeful
- Talented and Creative
- Orderly and Organized
- Perfectionist – High Standards

Very often, a person might have a **Mixed Personality.** He may have a combination of two types of personalities mentioned above. The traits they possess show what their primary temperament is and how it is joined with their secondary temperament. For example, if primary temperament is a Choleric and runner-up temperament is a Phlegmatic, people would be listed as, "Choleric/Phlegmatic" which means that they are organized and good planners, but at the same time, being phlegmatic, they tend to worry about their performance in life. Similarly "Sanguine/Melancholic" people are highly emotional people whose moods can fluctuate from highs to lows and back again quickly. The Sanguine outgoing nature often allows the Melancholy critical nature to become apparent too easily.

Thus, people with different kinds of personalities have their own unique ways to handle situations which can lead to diverse levels of efficacy being achieved.

III. ROLES OF THE PRINCIPALS

3.1 Leadership –

Being a respectable leader, the principal needs to take charge to ensure the successes along with the failures of his school. A great leader regularly seeks to work towards the growth and expansion of his school in all areas and then tries to determine how exactly to accomplish those expansions regardless of how challenging they might be.

3.2 Adept at Building Relationships with People –

There are various groups of people that principals are required to deal with on a daily-basis including their teachers, officers, support staff, students, parents and members of the community. In order to deal with these, a diverse approach is required for each specific group since the individuals forming the group are unique in their own right. People approach a principal with a diverse set of emotions that can range from happiness to grief and even anger. When dealing with such situations, the principal needs to involve all the affected people in the decision-making process and show them that he cares about them. They should be able to trust him that he will act in their best interest and do whatever is necessary to better their situation.

3.3 Balance Tough Love with Earned Praise –

This is particularly true with pupils and teachers. A principal shouldn't be a pushover. He let people get away with mediocrity. He has to set high-expectations and make sure that he holds those in charge to equivalent standards. This means that there might be times when the principal is required to reprimand individuals and in the process hurt their feelings. It's that part of the job that is not pleasant; however it's absolutely necessary in order to run a school effectively.

At the same time, the principal must bid praise whenever suitable. He should be appreciative of all those teachers doing an extraordinary job. Further, he must remember to identify students who outshine in the areas of academics, leadership and/or citizenship. An exceptional principal can inspire people using an amalgamation of both of these approaches.

3.4 Fair and Consistent –

The credibility of a principal is very deeply affected when a principal is inconsistent with how he handles similar situations. While it is true that no two cases can precisely be the same, he must act according to the manner in which a similar problem was dealt by him in the past. Students, in fact, know exactly how principals deal with student discipline, and thus are more likely to compare the principal's actions from case to case.

3.5 Excellent Listener –

There is no knowing when an annoyed student, an unhappy parent or even a distressed teacher will approach a principal for help. In order to be well equipped to handle those situations, it is a prerequisite for any principal to be an exceptional listener. Most difficult situations can be disarmed simply by showing that the other person is being carefully listened to. A principal shouldn't be afraid to go the extra mile to resolve an issue even if that means mediating two disagreeing students. In other cases, the principal might have a conversation with a teacher to understand his side of the problem and after that proceed by conveying the same to the parent. The whole process commences by just having an open ear.

3.6 Visionary-

Education is indeed an ever evolving field. Especially in the modern times, something better and more enhanced can always be found to be available at a principal's disposal. If a principal is not struggling for the progress his school, he is not doing his work. This is a practice which will always be on-going no matter what. Even when he has been in-charge of the same school for several years, there are still numerous things that can be done to make sure that the overall quality of the school is being improved. It is the responsibility of a principal to see that everyone gets comfortable enough to work efficiently, is able to familiarise themselves with new technology and is constantly improving for the growth of the school.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

4.1 Itsueli (1995) has opined that "the school leader is required to perform three vital functions: namely, to discern and influence the development of goals and policies; to establish and coordinate educational organizations concerned with planning and implementing appropriate programs; and to procure and manage the resources necessary to support the educational system and its planned programs".

Today, with the advent of technology and cultural shifts, the position of the principal is far more sophisticated and the job is far more complex than in previous decades. This complexity can best be seen in the incredible number of functions that principals are expected to perform, daily and often simultaneously.

4.2 Moran and Garies (2004) state that "a decisive factor to have a good school is to have experienced principals. They not only shoulder the burden of managing educational centres but are also considered as coordinators to select, equip and manage human resources, all of whom should be experienced enough and have special abilities to teach".

Thus, the maintenance of quality and standards in education depends largely on the extent to which leadership responsibilities of principals are effectively carried out. A major part of this is greatly influenced by the respective personalities and temperaments of Principals. This makes it all the more important to study the variable personalities of principals since it in turn effects the overall growth and development of the school.

4.3 Vatur (2001) also states that "like all other people, principals have different needs, talents, motives, desires, inclinations, and personality characteristics, all of which can affect their performances. Therefore, some features

like friendliness, self-confidence, wilfulness, intelligence and ability to manage, discernment, etc can help predicting people's success".

V. PERSONALITY OF THE PRINCIPALS

Further, the study of human resources of an organization has also explained that all people have some exceptional characteristics which are may not be same from those of their colleagues. Principals are no exceptions to this logic. They too have dissimilar interests, abilities and special personality characteristics and it is clear that these factors can affect their performance directly.

The fact that **principal personality** plays a very important role in improving school performance has also been confirmed by Gurr et al. (2005) who stated that most of principals' personality characteristics have a major role to play in the enhancement of the students' efficiency when it comes to their performance and behaviour.

Rahman (2001) has also, in his study of personality variables found that many "principals, who were not open in the discharge of their duties as a principal, often did not appreciate the ideas and innovations of their teachers". Furthermore, he pointed out that one of the significant personalities of principals, associated with school achievement, is of 'openness to experience' and that a school principal should always have an open mind.

An overview of how principals of a particular personality type have an effect on the overall environment and efficacy of their schools can be summarised as under:

5.1 Sanguine Principals-

These principals are unsurprisingly more people-oriented. They have an energetic and a confident drive in a favourable environment. They provide encouragement to their surroundings by motivating others to work collectively. As far as the managerial nature of such Principals is concerned, they tend to be lively, edgy, approachable, tolerant, and trusting of others. They have a natural desire to get involved with the staff and parents. Sanguine Principals also fear rejection and not making a favourable impression. Since they can get easily distracted, they can change quickly and adapt to different situations.

5.2 Phlegmatic Principals-

These principals are unsurprisingly more service-oriented. They are usually found to be passive in not only favourable but also unfavourable environments. They impact their school's environment by collaborating with their staff members to accomplish various tasks. Administratively, such Principals avoid getting too immersed with their staff, and life in general, favouring a secluded, low-key life-style, balanced around household and family. Phlegmatic Principals also struggle in making quick decisions. They are rational, concrete, and conventional academics. They are often determined, and steady, at whatever task they embark on. It is because of this passive nature of theirs, that they prefer procrastinating effortlessly and habitually.

5.3 Choleric Principals-

These principals are not only naturally result-oriented but also self-confident, independent, and very autonomous. They affect their environment by defeating opposition to get the required results. Managerially, such Principals are straightforward, upfront and firm when communicating with their staff. They like pressurizing situations and are easily uninterested when things are not happening fast enough. They are daring and like to take risks. They do not like to leave room for negotiations.

5.4 The Melancholic Principal-

These principals are naturally not only wants to do things correctly, but also is quality-oriented. They have a cautious, tentative response designed to reduce tension in an unfavourable school environment. They influence their environment by adhering to the existing rules, and by doing things right according to predetermined (and accepted) standards that have been laid down by superior authorities. Their best Managerial trait is that they are well-organized. They are determined to make the right and best decision. They may take unwarranted amounts of time to think about their options before making a decision. Such Principals fear taking risks, making wrong decisions, and being viewed as incompetent persons. Melancholies are sceptical about almost everything, but they are creative and capable people.

The more successful a principal is in doing his or her duties, the more goals are achieved by that school. But what kind of principals can be successful is an important case to consider. Given below are some tips for Principals:

5.5 How to work smarter if you are sanguine principal?

- Don't torture yourself with hard work.
- Become an efficient time manager: don't overset or procrastinate.
- Combine routine and dynamic tasks to stay productive.
- Be proactive. Participate in social discussions.
- Take advantage of your sociability: be flexible when it goes to conflict negotiations.

5.6 How to work smarter if you are choleric principal?

- Solution-oriented, lead projects from A to Z.
- Take short breaks during a day to calm down your temper.
- Choleric people can't stand boredom, so try to get emotionally involved with every task.
- Work with people who have similar professional interests.

5.7 How to work smarter if you are phlegmatic principal?

- Start working on a project in advance.
- Better solve one critical problem than spend energy on multitasking.
- Avoid procrastination and inactivity.
- Learn to speak for your opinion and discontent in public.

5.8 How to work smarter if you are melancholic principal?

- Organize a workspace properly. Nothing should distract you.
- Do work in pieces.
- Don't procrastinate; prevent yourself from stresses before deadlines.
- When it goes to criticism, try to work out objectifying attitude.
- Take advantage of your detail-oriented nature: struggle with indecision and perfectionism.

Hence, we can easily make out that the specific personality of a principal plays an important role to make sure that the desired goals are achieved more methodically and analytically. It is one's personality trait that determines to a large extent how well one is set for success in any field.

v1. CONCLUSION

It can thus be concluded that the roles that principals need to undertake and perform in order make sure their school is running efficiently are definite and precise. The performance of the duties to successfully fulfil these roles can be rewarding as well as challenging. Even with different personality traits, principals have an underlying duty to create a learning environment that is collective and accepting of everyone. However, they would have to perform these roles with utmost care, caution and sincerity to carry out their duties towards the school like a leader would. It has been observed that these roles are always guided by the personality of the principal and their performance thus varies from individual to individual. What needs to be highlighted however is that good leaders and principals must not solely rely on their instincts that stem from their personality but rather adapt to include other personality traits that would help them fulfil their role more efficiently? Successful principals, therefore cannot be found in strict categories of personality types, but rather in the ways they are able to inculcate the good traits from each personality type to perform their duties towards the school regardless of how difficult it might be.

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