

## Developing Leadership Qualities in Practice Teachers

### Abstract

One of the most important characteristics in being a good teacher is being a good leader. It is said that good leaders are made not born and so should be good teachers; they should be made not born. In the field of teachers' training in Algeria, practice teachers who supervise student teachers during their practice at schools are generally selected among the most experienced teachers who are also judged to be the most competent. Their role is to provide guidance to the trainees and to take charge of and evaluate them in their teaching practice. However, these practice teachers have never been prepared to take upon themselves the role of guide or leader to other teachers or trainees.

Through this article, we want to highlight the characteristics of a good practice teacher and the role of leader he/she must play in order to be an effective element during the training period. Likewise, using Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid, we show what leadership style our practice teachers represent when mentoring student teachers and suggest how these qualities can be brought to the best levels of achievement.

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### ملخص

تعد عملية القيادة إحدى أهم مميزات المدرس الجيد. يقال أن القائد الناجح لا يولد وهو، وإنما يصبح كذلك من خلال التكوين والتدريب المحكمين. يتم في الجزائر اختيار الأساتذة المطبقين الذين يشرفون على الطلبة المتربصين خلال فترة تدريبهم في المدارس من بين الأساتذة الأكثر خبرة و الذين يشهد لهم بالكفاءة. يتمثل دورهم في تقديم التوجيه للمتربصين، الأخذ بيدهم وتقييم ممارستهم لمهنة التدريس رغم أنهم لم يتلقوا أي تكوين لأخذ على عاتقهم مهمة التوجيه والقيادة لزملائهم أو للطلبة المتربصين تحت إشرافهم.

### 1. Introduction

Mentoring Trainees in Algeria has not changed in practices for more than forty years. Since the launch of the Technological Institutes of Education in 1970, the role of the practice teacher has always been to provide guidance to the trainees, to supervise them and evaluate their teaching practice. It has never gone beyond this stereotype. The same practices and traditions have been repeated for several years. As educators, we have a keener insight into the strengths, as well as the ills, inherent in the field; we are also the best poised to ameliorate those shortcomings we have control over.

The aim of this article is to energize, and inspire practice teachers to take on leadership behaviours, in an attempt to

نود من خلال هذا المقال إلقاء الضوء على خصائص الأستاذ المطبق الجيد و كذا على دور القائد الذي يجب أن يقوم به ليكون بذلك عنصرا فعلا خلال فترة التدريب. نبين كذلك من خلال استعمالنا لشبكة قياس التسيير لبلايك وماتن نوع القيادة الذي يمثله أساتذتنا المطبقون عند تدريبهم الطلبة المترشحين في أقسامهم و نقترح كيف يمكن لهاته الخصائص أن تبلغ أعلى مستويات التحقيق.

improve education from within rather than allowing outside observers to dictate remedies. We, first, display an account of the practice of mentoring. Then, we introduce the concept of leadership and provide an enquiry into leadership qualities in practice teachers when mentoring student teachers in order to offer better insight into their relationship and inspire practice teachers to better practices.

## 2. The Practice of Mentoring

Before the training session in their final year at the Teachers' Training School, the Student teachers have spent a year or more studying pedagogical trends, as well as teaching methods and techniques courses. However, they have had no experience working as the sole responsible professional in a classroom and got limited knowledge of the demands placed on teachers. As the challenges and demands increase, they find that they need strategies to help them reflect on and make sense of what actually happens in the classroom. The training period provides the practical experience students need and want after their long immersion in books, journal articles, and professional and academic conversations. This is the period that helps the trainees in their transition from student to professional; so, practice teachers have to take on their role as mentors in a most meaningful manner.

### 2.1. An Overview of Mentoring

Mentoring is not a modern activity. It has a long history, possibly dating as far back as the eighteenth century B.C., when the laws of Hammurabi of Babylon stated that craftsmen have to teach their techniques and pass on their experience to younger apprentice. The practice of apprenticeship continued through the centuries and knew modifications, when business and industry adopted the apprenticeship model. Education has adopted many of the practices of the business world, including mentoring. Boreen et al. (2009) mention that in England, it started with the Industrial Revolution, teachers experienced apprenticeship as "pupil teachers"; and in the United States this educational concept was introduced in the mid-1800s, when new teachers, who took no education courses, were apprenticed to experienced teachers, and were expected to follow their teaching style and methods. By the 1950s, many teacher education institutions had changed the term "practice teaching" to "student teaching" and the term "teacher training" to "teacher education" (Furlong and Maynard 1995); changes in practice and wording that reflected shifts in thinking about the practice of trainee teachers.

In later years, the teaching philosophy has changed from one that is teacher oriented to one that is student centred. Similarly, there was a change in the preparation of trainee teachers. The "pupil teacher" in the eighteenth century used to stick with a master

teacher and copied his techniques; thereby he gained practice without theory. In later times, most teacher education institutes have linked theory and practice, colleges now provide theory and the students' training period offers practice under the supervision of school teachers. In this way, students can relate the "what": the practice of teaching, to the "why": the theories underlying the practice to better understand why a particular practice does or does not work in the classroom. However, a large gap exists between the two stages: theory and practice. In Algeria, this is mainly due to the lack of correlation between what the trainees receive as instruction at their colleges and what practice teachers received during their pre-service or in-service training. The contents, they received, diverge more than converge. Likewise, there is no coordination between the colleges and the educational district in matters of teacher education and training; much has to be done in this sense. In-service teachers are in great need to refresher courses in order to be up to date with new theories and techniques in the field. Practice teachers should be more concerned with these courses and should be prepared to undertake the role of monitor through the organization of regular days in service and meetings with specialists in the field.

Nowadays we are aware of the fact that students and beginning teachers, as adult learners, have different learning styles as well as "multiple intelligences" (Gardner, 2006). We are far from thinking that trainee teachers should imitate or copy the methods of experienced teachers. The emphasis now is on developing the spirit of reflection in trainee teachers, and on making them develop their own individual teaching styles. Teacher education colleges have considered the need for classroom experience early in teacher education preparation, and many have established partnerships with different schools to establish professional development programs for beginning teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2005 and Teitel, 2003). There is agreement now that the future professional success of a student or a beginning teacher can be achieved only through assistance of various kinds and the role of the mentor is a very significant one.

## **2.2. The Role of the Mentor**

Gabriel (2005) defines the mentor as a person who takes on the responsibility of coaching and advising student teachers and teachers who are new to the school system. In Algeria this is the role assigned to practice teachers. Gabriel explains that a mentor need not always be the strongest instructional leader, but he should have a solid grounding in best practices and his content area. He should be able to suggest ideas and strategies to assist in classroom instruction. In addition, he must be astute enough to read people; in other words, he must be perceptive and have a high emotional intelligence. According to Boreen et al. (2009), "mentor" refers to an experienced teacher who works with colleagues new to the profession; and mentoring represents the idea of guiding, reflecting, and coaching:

- Guiding: mentors should attempt to help beginning teachers analyze their classroom practice and think about what they do in the classroom and why.

- Coaching: it refers to helping beginning teachers to connect theory with practice. Mentors need to be prepared to describe the “whys” and “hows” of their own practice, even if beginning teachers do not ask about them directly.
- Reflecting: this is about encouraging the beginning teacher to ask questions, both procedural and theoretical. Using reflection, both new and experienced teachers can examine what happened in the classroom as well as why it happened, thereby increasing teacher professionalism and maturity.

Boreen et al. (2009) concern is mainly mentoring beginning teachers who are graduates taking their first year at school mentored by a colleague. We consider that student teachers are not different, and the same behaviour can be followed by a practice teacher as a mentor during the training session. According to Morehead et al. (2009), the training helps young people move from the role of student to that of teacher. The mentor or practice teacher contributes to ensure a positive student teaching experience by developing an affirmative professional relationship, supervising the trainee’s work competency, and evaluating her / his progress. The ideal student teaching experience is characterized by many opportunities to share ideas and information, both formally and informally. However, the mentoring role is often not well understood (Sundli 2007) and the relationship between the mentor or practice teacher and the student teacher is not the most appropriate one. Tension between the support and assessment responsibilities of mentors may produce confusion and uneasiness and heighten feelings of vulnerability (Rippon and Martin, 2006; Williams and Prestage, 2002). Because they were not prepared to perform such a role, when becoming practice teachers or mentors, teachers often rely on insights gained from how they, themselves, were taught (Rajuan et al., 2007), how they teach (Martin, 1997) and how they were coached during their training period, if at all (Bullough , 2005).

Mentoring student teachers does not always produce such desirable results as many practice teachers attest. A variety of difficulties are reported, by both student teachers and mentors. For example, mentors claim that giving feedback can be extremely difficult especially when they are confronted to a student teacher who does not accept criticism and considers what needs to be said challenges what she / he takes herself / himself to be. When they are certain she is doing a wonderful job in the classroom but are criticized by the mentor, surprise sometimes, anger, follows. Student teachers, on the other hand, are always complaining about lack of time for planning and for ongoing conversation with the practice teacher about many teaching matters. Other issues contribute significantly to the difficulty of building a “healthy” relationship between beginning teachers and their mentors, and add to the list of commonly expressed frustrations. Practice teacher-trainee relationships are inevitably complex and fragile (Rippon and Martin, 2006) and conditions like these make relationship building even more challenging emotionally. A practice teacher in charge of fourth year English students from the TTSC explained that the trainees’ relationship with the practice teachers is very important for their attitude towards the profession. Some trainees come with enthusiasm and others come with very low aspirations. He mentioned that: “some trainees feel so happy and satisfied for their training that they offer us gifts and keep in

touch with us; others don't even say thank you". We think that it is the role of practice teacher to take care of this relationship which seems very important for the career of the young trainee. One of the mottos of the military is "People and mission first". That is, nothing is more important than looking out for the people and nothing is more important than accomplishing the mission. A good leader can do both. The practice teacher like the military has to take in charge both "the trainees and the mentoring".

To perform his role effectively, the practice teacher has to be aware of building a relationship of trust with his trainees. This requires the mentor to demonstrate skills of listening, sharing information, and giving feedback. Lyman, Morehead, and Foyle (1989) have identified a number of additional factors that build teacher trust. These factors include a positive tone, clear expectations, a concern for the student teacher, and a useful feedback. They state that:

- It is important for student teachers to have a clear understanding of what is done well in the classroom so that these skills can be applied in further student teaching experiences, and in their own classrooms.
- It is important that they know what the teacher expects and that the information needed about the teacher context is provided.
- Concern for the student teacher can be demonstrated in numerous ways. One of the most important is providing information about the school environment. Specific information about the context of the school and classroom in which the student teacher will be working is needed.
- Feedback that recognizes unique strengths and qualities lets the trainee know he is valued and appreciated by the mentor. By identifying strengths and discussing them, a mentor will improve relations and trust. Focusing on teaching behaviours rather than on personal traits when giving feedback provides the student teacher with the best opportunity to make positive changes that impact teaching.

Furthermore, fellow teachers must see the practice teacher as a specialist in his / her content area. Trainees need to be able to trust him / her when she / he makes suggestions regarding objectives, lesson plans, and assessments.

A number of factors can aid or hinder the mentoring relationship. It may be helpful to be aware of these factors in order to build on the strengths of the situation and find ways to counter potential problems. An effective practice teacher listens, communicates, understands trainees, knows the content area, and is willing to aid the growth of these beginning teachers. These are the qualities required in a leader that we need practice teachers to develop.

### **3. Practice Teachers and Leadership**

During their training session the student teachers are confronted to the different classroom situations but they prove to have little if no idea about how to behave in such unexpected situations despite the amount of content knowledge, concerning

pedagogical trends and the different approaches to teaching different subjects, they received at college or university. They can only be helped by their mentor who would play the role of the leader in such “out of the blue” situations. Mentors may give student teachers few opportunities to contribute to class decision making. They may feel that they need to keep decision making in their own hands or student teachers will take the class in directions with which the mentoring teachers are uncomfortable. Mentors, however, should take a rather leading more than supervising position.

### 3.1. Concepts of Leadership

Leadership is a practice by which a person conducts others to accomplish an objective and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. This is the way mainly observed by army leaders, political leaders, and movement leaders through history. Leaders carry out this process by applying leadership qualities; such as beliefs, values, ethics, character, knowledge, and skills. Some people have attained high positions in their job, but they are not considered as leaders. Indeed, their position gives them the right to accomplish certain tasks and objectives in the organization, but it does not make them leaders, it simply makes you the boss. Leadership differs in that it makes the followers want to achieve high goals, rather than simply bossing people around.

Good leaders are made not born. If a person has the desire and willpower, s/he can become an effective leader. Good leaders develop through a never ending process of self-study, education, training, and experience. Bass’ (1989 & 1990) theory of leadership states that there are three basic ways to explain how people become leaders. The first two explain the leadership development for a small number of people; these theories are:

- Some personality traits may lead people naturally into leadership roles. This is the Trait Theory.
- A crisis or important event may cause a person to rise to the occasion, which brings out extraordinary leadership qualities in an ordinary person. This is the Great Event Theory.
- People can choose to become leaders. People can learn leadership skills. This is the Transformational Leadership Theory. It is the most widely accepted theory today.

The basis of good leadership is honourable character and selfless service to the others. In their eyes, leadership is everything someone does that affects their well-being. Respected leaders concentrate on what they *are* [be] (such as beliefs and character), what they *know* (such as job, task, and human nature), and what they *do* (such as implementing, motivating, and providing direction). People want to be guided by those they respect and who have a clear sense of direction. To gain respect, they must be ethical. A sense of direction is achieved by conveying a strong vision of the future.

### **3.2. Factors of Leadership**

In order to make it effective, there are four major factors in leadership that must be taken into consideration

#### **-Follower**

Different people require different styles of leadership. A person who lacks motivation requires a different approach than one with a high degree of motivation; you must know your people! The fundamental starting point is having a good understanding of human nature such as needs, emotions, and motivation.

#### **-Leader**

You must have an honest understanding of who you are, what you know, and what you can do. Also, note that it is the followers, not the leader, who determine if a leader is successful. If they do not trust or lack confidence in their leader, then they will be uninspired. To be successful you have to convince your followers, not yourself or your superiors, that you are worthy of being followed.

#### **-Communication**

You lead through two-way communication. Much of it is nonverbal. For instance, when you “set the example”, that communicates to your people that you would not ask them to perform anything that you would not be willing to do. What and how you communicate either builds or hams the relationship between you and your trainees.

#### **-Situation**

All are different. What you do in one situation will not always work in another. You must use your judgement to decide the best course of action and leadership style needed for each situation. For example, you may need to remedy an inappropriate behaviour in time; otherwise the results may prove ineffective.

### **3.3. Leadership Models**

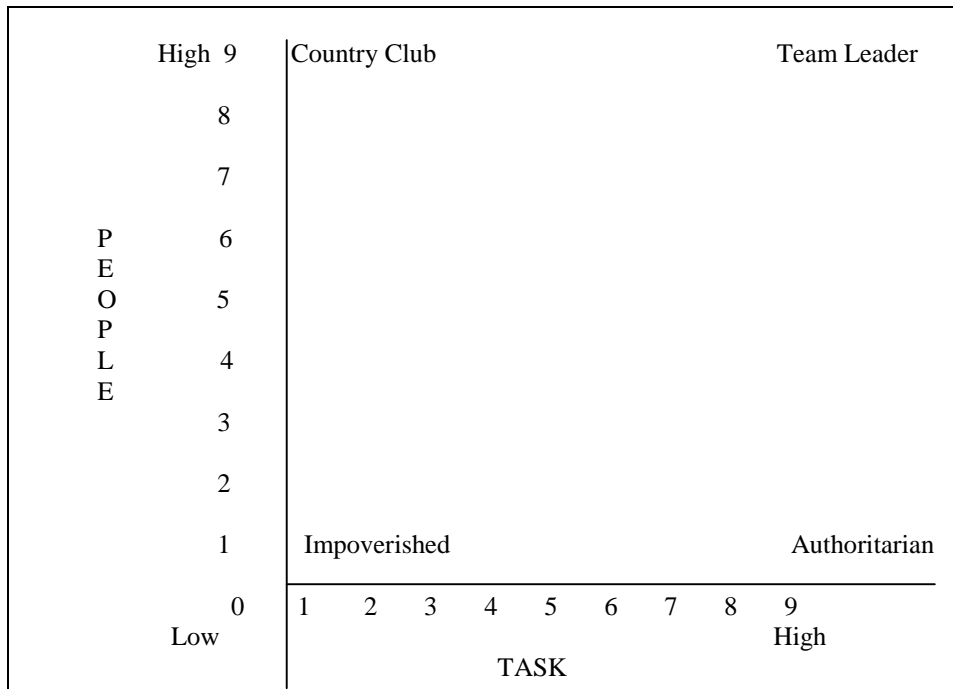
Leadership models help us to understand what makes leaders act the way they do. The ideal is not to lock oneself into a type of behaviour discussed in the model, but to realize that every situation calls for a different approach or behaviour to be taken. As an example we will discuss the Managerial Grid by Blake and Mouton.

#### **3.3.1. Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid**

The Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid (1985) uses two axes:

1. “Concern for people” is plotted using the vertical axis
2. “Concern for task” is along the horizontal axis.

Both axes have a range of 0 to 9. The notion that just two dimensions can describe a managerial behaviour has the attraction of simplicity. These dimensions can be drawn as a graph or grid:



**Figure 1: The Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid**

Blake and Mouton (1985) consider that most people fall somewhere near the middle of the two axes. But, by going to the extremes, that is, people who score on the far end of the scales, we come up with four types of leaders:

- Authoritarian (9 on task, 1 on people)
- Team Leader (9 on task, 9 on people)
- Country Club (1 on task, 9 on people)
- Impoverished (1 on task, 1 on people)

**Authoritarian Leader** (high task, low relationship)

People who obtain this score are very much oriented towards the task and are firm with their workers. There is little or no allowance for cooperation or collaboration. Heavily task oriented people display these characteristics: they are very strong on schedules; they expect people to do what they are told without question or debate; when something goes wrong they tend to focus on who is to blame rather than concentrate on exactly what is wrong and how to prevent it; they are intolerant of what they see as dissent. So it is difficult for their subordinates to contribute or develop.



**Team Leader** (high task, high relationship)

This type of person leads by positive example and endeavours to foster a team environment in which all team members can reach their highest potential, both as team members and as people. They encourage the team to reach team goals as effectively as possible, while also working tirelessly to strengthen the bonds among the various members. They normally form and lead some of the most productive teams.

**Country Club Leader** (low task, high relationship)

This person uses predominantly reward power to maintain discipline and to encourage the team to accomplish its goals. Conversely, they are almost incapable of employing the more punitive coercive and legitimate powers. This inability results from fear that using such powers could jeopardize relationships with the other team members.

**Impoverished Leader** (low task, low relationship)

This is the kind of leader who uses a “delegate and disappear” management style. Since they are not committed to either task accomplishment or maintenance; they essentially allow their team to do whatever it wishes and prefer to detach themselves from the team process by allowing the team to suffer from a series of power struggles.

The most desirable place for a leader to be along the two axes at most times would be a 9 on task and 9 on people – the Team Leader. However, the other three must not be entirely dismissed. Certain situations might call for one of the other three to be used at times. For example, by playing the Impoverished Leader, the team is allowed to gain self-reliance. Being an Authoritarian Leader is the right way to instil a sense of discipline in an unmotivated member. By carefully studying the situation and the forces affecting it, we would know at what points along the axes we need to be in order to achieve the desired result.

#### **4. Practice Teachers’ Leadership Style**

Mentoring and leadership seem to be very connected. Practice teachers as responsible of a group of young student teachers in their classes are playing the role of both the mentor and the leader. Every teacher has, of course, his own way in mentoring since no special preparation or training as such was destined to practice teachers. In the same way, every practice teacher has his proper way in leading. The leadership style that the practice teacher would display is very significant in his way of mentoring student teachers.

##### **4.1. Sample Population**

In Algeria, during the student teachers’ training session, practice teachers play the role of the mentor, the model and leader. Student teachers depend upon them, and on their beliefs about mentoring and their leadership styles. In the context of this study, we tried to adopt the Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid (1985) in order to investigate leadership behaviours among practice teachers at the middle school level in charge of the English department fourth year trainees from the Teachers’ Training School in Constantine (TTSC) during their training session.

The practice teachers engaged with the TTSC are selected by the Educational District in Constantine among those working in middle schools situated in the same area as the TTSC or easily reached by public transportation; so that the trainees who are mostly not from Constantine can reach them without any difficulty. As a result of this choice which is more geographical than pedagogical, we cannot affirm that these teachers are the best to be in charge of the trainees. However, on the whole, all of them proved to be serious teachers who held in esteem by their superiors. Some of them have been teaching for more than twenty years, others are less experienced. It is to be mentioned also that one of the practice teachers is new to the profession and have not achieved more than five years teaching. All these teachers are either university graduates or have received their education in the Technological Institutes of Education.

#### **4.2. Data Collection**

In order to collect data about the practice teachers' leadership style and the attitudes they have towards the teacher trainees, we administered 14 questionnaires from hand to hand to 14 out of the 18 practice teachers in the city of Constantine who are used to receive trainees from the TTSC. The teachers approached have been introduced to the aim of the research and the questionnaire. They have been asked to read each statement carefully, then, using a scale from 0 (never) to 5 (always), decide the extent to which it actually applies to them. (See figure 2: Questionnaire administered to the practice teachers). After three days from their administration, the questionnaires were collected. Ten questionnaires out of the fourteen distributed were given back: the teachers who did not return the questionnaires were absent the day of the collection.

The questionnaire consists of a list of 18 statements about leadership behaviour. These statements tackle two dimensions: the "concern for people" (statements 1,4,6,9,10,12,14,16,17) and the "concern for task" (statements 2,3,5,7,8,11,13,15,18) as explained in The Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid (1985). The ones that tackle the concern for people dimension are related to those leadership behaviours that take more into consideration the relationship between the practice teacher and the trainees as well as his students. They are mostly about her/his behaviour in the classroom towards the other members of the group like participating in decision making (statement 1), helping and coaching them on new tasks and explaining new procedures (statements 4, 12 and 17), encouraging creativity in the trainees (statement 6), applying new ideas in the field to develop one's leadership behaviour (statement 9), and building a team spirit and good relationship with the members of the group (statements 10, 14 and 16). The rest of the statements concern the task dimension. They deal mostly with the teacher's attitude towards the accomplishment, completion and success of the different activities that her/his students and trainees are asked to realize and achieve. For example, statements 2, 5, 7 are about accomplishing tasks taking into consideration every detail; statements 3, 8, 11, 13 deal with managing time for every task; statement 15 considers analyzing problems and 18 concerns implementing new procedures learned from reading books and articles about the teaching profession. The rating the teachers give to every statement will help determine the leadership style they belong to after calculating the final scores.

**Questionnaire**

Below is a list of statements about leadership behaviour. Read each one carefully, then, using the following scale, decide the extent to which it actually applies to you. For best results, answer as truthfully as possible.

never                      sometimes                      always  
0      1      2      3      4      5

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I encourage my class to participate when it comes decision making time and I try to implement their ideas and suggestions.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Nothing is more important than accomplishing a goal or task.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I closely monitor the schedule to ensure a task or project will be completed in time.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy coaching people on new tasks and procedures.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ The more challenging a task is, the more I enjoy it.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I encourage my students to be creative about their work.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ When seeing a complex task through to completion, I ensure that every detail is accounted for.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ I find it easy to carry out several complicated tasks at the same time.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy reading articles, books, and journals about training, leadership, and psychology; and then putting what I have read into action.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ When correcting mistakes, I do not worry about jeopardizing relationships.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ I manage my time very efficiently.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy explaining the intricacies and details of a complex task or project to my students.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Breaking large projects into small manageable tasks is second nature to me.

14. _____ Nothing is more important than building a great class team.
15. _____ I enjoy analyzing problems.
16. _____ I honour other people's boundaries.
17. _____ Counselling my students to improve their performance or behaviour is second nature to me.
18. _____ I enjoy reading articles, books, and trade journals about my profession; and then implementing the new procedures I have learned.

**Figure 2: Questionnaire administered to the practice teachers (from Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid (1985))**

### 4.3. Findings and Results

After collecting the questionnaires, and in order to calculate the results of the study so that we can determine the teachers' leadership style, the answers were transferred to a scoring section as shown below:

People	Task
Statement	Statement
1. _____	2. _____
4. _____	3. _____
6. _____	5. _____
9. _____	7. _____
10. _____	8. _____
12. _____	11. _____
14. _____	13. _____
16. _____	15. _____
17. _____	18. _____
TOTAL _____	TOTAL _____
X 0.2 = _____	X 0.2 = _____

**Figure 3: The scoring section (adopted from Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid (1985))**

The total was multiplied by 0.2 to get the final score in the "Concern people" dimension questions and the "Concern task" dimension in order to decide whether the teachers focus more on the person or the task when mentoring the student teachers during their training session.

Once the final scores calculated, they are plotted on the graph below by drawing a horizontal line from the approximate people score (vertical line) to the right of the matrix, and drawing a vertical line from the approximate task score on the horizontal axis to the top of the matrix. Then, two lines are drawn from each dot until they intersect. The area of intersection is the leadership dimension that every practice teacher operates out of.

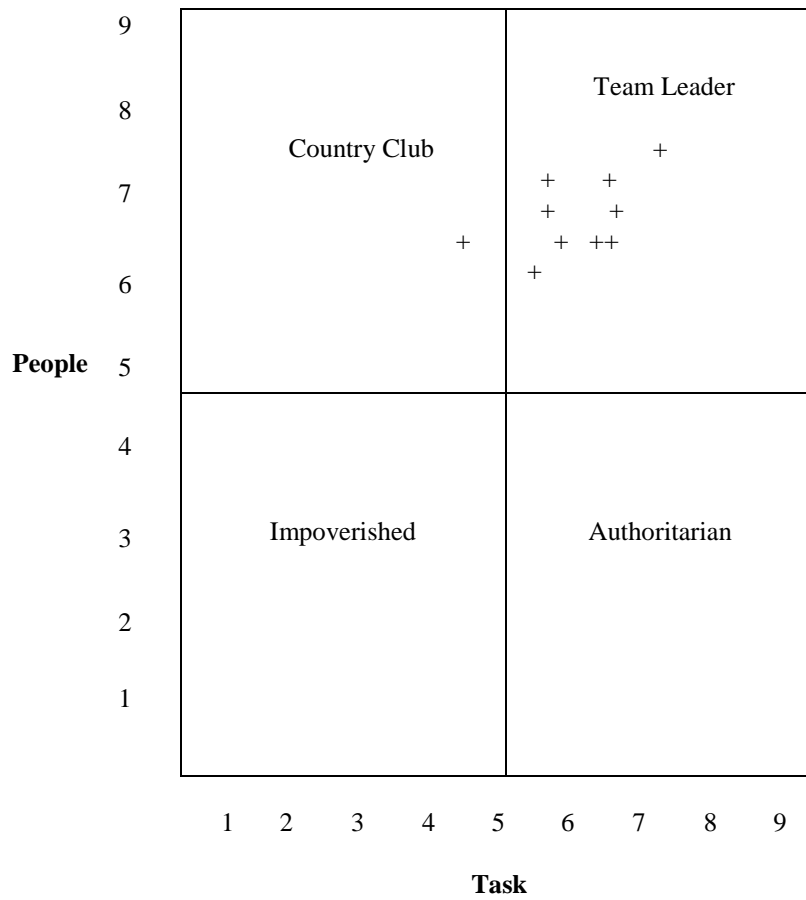
After collecting the questionnaires, we calculated the final scores obtained by every teacher on each dimension: “Concern for people” and “Concern for task”. The scores were as follows:

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Concern for people final score</b>	<b>Concern for task final score</b>
01	06.00	05.80
02	06.00	04.20
03	06.20	06.20
04	06.80	05.60
05	05.40	05.20
06	06.60	05.60
07	06.00	06.40
08	07.40	07.40
09	06.00	06.60
10	06.80	06.60
<b>Average</b>	<b>06.32</b>	<b>05.96</b>

**Table 1: Final Scores on “Concern for people” and “Concern for task” dimensions**

With scores ranging between 05.40 and the 07.40 on a scale between 01 and 09, we notice that all the teachers obtained scores above the average in the “concern for people” dimension; the average final score was 06.32. Consequently, we can consider that all teachers show great interest to their students and the trainees they receive. The final scores obtained in the “concern for task” dimension were also above the average except for one teacher (04.20) but with lower scores than the ones obtained in the “concern for people” section. An average final score of 05.96 indicates that teachers do not neglect the “concern for task” but they are not concerned for task as they are for people.

When plotting the teachers’ final scores on the graph by Blake and Mouton (1985) in The Managerial Grid III we obtained the following:



**Graph 1: Practice Teachers' Leadership Styles**

From the graph above we notice that nine out of the ten teachers belong to the Team Leaders dimension to varying degrees. The highest score is 07.40 on a scale between 01 and 09 in the concern for people section and 07.40, as well, in the concern for task section; and the lowest being 05.40 in the concern for people section and 05.20 on the concern for task section. Only one teacher has obtained a low final score in the concern for task section: 04.20; a score which makes her belong to the Country Club dimension since her final score in the people section is of 06.00. No teacher proved to be an Impoverished Leader or an Authoritarian one. However, like any other

instrument that attempts to profile a person, we have to take in other factors such as how the headmaster and the colleagues at work rate us as a leader.

The comment that can be made on the results obtained is that those who showed belonging to the Team Leaders did not obtain very high scores that would confirm they are accomplished ones. Their scores make us say that they need to improve their leadership style by maximizing their concern for both “people” and “task” (more task than people). The only teacher who got a low score on the “concern for task” dimension and qualified as a “country club leader” has obtained a similar score to the others on the “concern for people” dimension but has demonstrated that the tasks’ accomplishment is not as important as her relationship with the trainees or with her students. Another comment that can be made is that only two out of the ten practice teachers were men. Their scores were the highest in both dimensions “people” and task”. This would lead us to say that we need another study to compare leadership styles among male and female teachers.

The conclusion we can make is that all our practice teachers favour their relationship with their trainees and their students over the importance they should allow for the performance and the behaviour the trainees and the students would display. The question to be asked in this context is the following: if a leader was really interested in the person, would the relationship (like being friends) be more important or would guiding the person on the correct behaviour and caring about her deeds be more important? We simply think that the best answer is: what makes good leaders tick is not solely the relationship but what it takes to build and develop the people around them.

## **5. Recommendations**

Now that we have shown what leadership style our practice teachers represent when mentoring student teachers, we come to suggest how these qualities can be brought to the best levels of achievement.

### **5.1. Developing Practice Teachers Leadership**

Good leaders are continually working and studying to improve their leadership skills; they are NOT resting on their laurels. In being professional, the practice teacher should consider how to encourage the trainees to develop their skills and abilities. She / He can significantly influence the trainee’s degree of involvement in professional activities and the quality of knowledge and satisfaction she / he gains in the application of that professional knowledge in the classroom. The positive, professional relationship between the trainee and the practice teacher is crucial to the trainee’s success. This positive, professional relationship requires that the practice teacher be a competent professional who models good teaching practices and is capable of articulating his reasons for teaching decisions into classroom practice. The ideal student teaching experience is characterized by many opportunities to share ideas and information, both formally and informally. Effective communication requires the mentor to demonstrate skills of listening, sharing information, and giving feedback. Collaboration is another fruitful way to promote and sustain professional development. When mentors assist, support, and guide professional inquiry and development, they steer newcomers toward enduring scholarly success. They can model productive behaviour and, because they adhere to professional expectations, demonstrate an honourable intellectual ethic. In

addition, a mentor will need to make the implicit explicit by explaining the theory behind her / his practice. She / He also needs to realize that student teachers can have problems or concerns that are completely unknown to her / him. Student teachers often feel reluctant to question the practice teacher's classroom practices because they fear their questions will be construed as criticism. It is extremely helpful to state explicitly that the trainee has permission to ask questions and should feel free to do so. The practice teacher may find these questions surprising or momentarily unsettling, but has to value them as opportunities for self-analysis and professional growth. Gabriel (2005) urges teachers to provide student teachers with resource files and give them materials even for classes they are not observing, because they might end up teaching them in the future. He explains that some of the best resources aspiring teachers receive will be from their practice experiences, not from their actual courses.

In addition we consider that the practice teacher's role could be more proficient if she / he works in collaboration with the university supervisor. Their mutual contact could only be beneficial to the trainees.

## **5.2. Developing Practice Teacher - University Supervisor Relationship**

The relationship practice teacher-university supervisor, unfortunately, has not reached the required expectations and needs to be given the required consideration by both. Usually as a third part, the university supervisor provides support to the trainee and to the practice teacher. However, the university supervisor sometimes feels alien to the context of the classroom or feels embarrassed to intervene to correct or remedy the practice teacher's behaviour or task and considers this act as an unwelcome interference. They understand their role as centring on support and avoiding being intrusive, directive, or critical. In the same way, the practice teacher sometimes feels threatened by the university supervisor's visits and considers her / him as an intruder. Yet, while it is true that most university supervisors are required to evaluate the trainee, their role is one of offering assistance, professional friendship, and support to both the trainee and the practice teacher or mentor. As professional educators, they can be an invaluable objective set of eyes to watch what is happening in the training and to offer guidance to the trainee and the practice teacher. The latter should feel comfortable in communicating with the university supervisor about a student's successes, as well as their own questions and concerns. She /He and the university supervisor play similar roles, encouraging, nudging, and modelling. In joining their efforts, they can provide collegial discussions and reflective thinking to make the trainee's experience enriching for all three participants.

For those mentoring student teachers, the presence of another professional in the classroom may also provide learning opportunities. The student's training would undoubtedly connect the practice teacher to new ideas in the field through conversations with her /his trainees and the university supervisor. Interactions with the supervisor may in turn establish stronger university connections for the mentor that can result in opportunities for further collaboration in the classroom and in the university setting.



## Conclusion

Traditionally, mentors have been the “experts” who pass on to beginning teachers the “tricks of the trade” that they have learned over the years. This is the “I’ll tell you what not to do so you do not make the same errors I did” philosophy. But just as this approach often does not work for parents, it may not work for mentors. An alternative to the “telling” approach is the strategy of guiding, reflecting, and coaching. Our practice teachers have shown that they take much more into consideration their relationship with the trainees and try to get on with them, something valued by the specialists; however, they have revealed that they do not treat the task of coaching and guiding with the same level of importance and that both the task and the people get just above the average degrees of consideration. Hence, practice teachers have demonstrated that they are “Team Leaders”, according to the Managerial Grid by Blake and Mouton, who can enhance their leadership qualities especially if they develop their relationship with the university supervisors and work in collaboration with them. Good leaders develop through a never ending process of self-study, education, training, and experience. Teachers like good leaders must as well continually work to improve their leadership skills.

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