

A Study on Rethinking Leadership Styles in Nagaland's Private Colleges for Contextual Relevance and Impact.

Aorenla M Jamir, Prof Fr Sunny Joseph

Research Scholar, Department of Education, St Joseph University

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ABSTRACT:

This study explores the leadership styles in private colleges in Nagaland, examining their relevance and impact within the local educational and cultural context. The research identifies the prevailing leadership models, predominantly authoritative, and evaluates their effectiveness in motivating faculty and fostering institutional growth. It also highlights the challenges faced by college leaders, including resistance to change, resource limitations, and the influence of traditional governance structures. The study suggests a shift towards transformational leadership and participatory management to improve faculty engagement, institutional performance, and adaptability to contemporary educational demands. It also proposes a leadership model tailored to Nagaland's unique socio-cultural environment, enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of leadership in the region's private colleges.

Keywords: Leadership styles, Private colleges, Nagaland, Transformational leadership, Educational context.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership in higher education significantly shapes institutional culture, academic performance, and overall management. In private colleges, especially in a culturally unique and geographically remote state like Nagaland, leadership takes on a more complex role. It must navigate administrative responsibilities, motivate faculty, and foster community involvement while respecting the cultural fabric of the region. This study investigates existing leadership styles in Nagaland's private colleges and aims to identify a model more relevant and effective in the local context, using secondary data sources.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bass (1990): Bass's work on transformational leadership is foundational in understanding how leaders can inspire and motivate followers beyond routine tasks. He argues that transformational leaders foster innovation, build trust, and create a shared vision. This leadership style contrasts with transactional leadership, which focuses more on rewards and compliance. Bass's theory is particularly relevant for educational institutions aiming to move from traditional hierarchical models toward more dynamic and engaging leadership.

Leithwood et al. (2006): Leithwood and colleagues emphasize that effective leadership in education directly influences student learning and school success. Their research shows that transformational leadership practices—such as setting high expectations, building collaborative cultures, and fostering teacher development—are critical for improving academic outcomes. They also highlight that leadership must be adaptive and responsive to contextual challenges, which makes their findings applicable to the unique cultural and administrative environment of Nagaland's private colleges.

Ao and Longkumer (2019): This study specifically addresses the challenges faced by private colleges in Nagaland. Ao and Longkumer observe that leadership in these institutions tends to be highly centralized and hierarchical, with little faculty involvement in decision-making processes. They discuss how such leadership structures can hinder institutional growth, reduce staff motivation, and limit the adoption of innovative

practices. Their work underscores the need for leadership styles that are more participatory and contextually sensitive in Nagaland.

Nayak and Pati (2020): Nayak and Pati provide a comprehensive overview of educational leadership practices across India, noting common challenges such as limited institutional autonomy, bureaucratic governance, and resistance to change. They argue that many Indian educational institutions are still rooted in traditional leadership styles that do not fully engage faculty or respond effectively to emerging educational needs. Their analysis is relevant for understanding the broader challenges faced by private colleges in Nagaland, which often reflect national trends alongside regional particularities.

Bush (2011): Bush offers a thorough review of major educational leadership theories, including transformational, instructional, and distributed leadership. He explains how these models differ in focus, from improving teaching and learning to managing organizational change and sharing leadership responsibilities. Bush's work provides a useful theoretical framework for analyzing and selecting leadership styles that can be adapted to the specific cultural and institutional context of Nagaland's private colleges.

METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY

The methodology defines the systematic approach used to achieve the research objectives of examining leadership styles in private colleges in Nagaland and identifying a contextually suitable leadership model. Due to logistical constraints and the focus on broader trends, this study employs secondary data analysis.

Research Design: The study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design using secondary data sources to analyze existing information related to leadership in private colleges. This approach enables an in-depth understanding of leadership styles, challenges, and contextual factors without direct data collection.

Data Sources: Secondary data were gathered from:

Academic literature: Peer-reviewed journals, books, and conference papers on educational leadership, especially those focused on India and Northeast India.

Government and institutional reports: Publications by the University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), and Nagaland state education department.

Case studies and regional research: Studies focusing on leadership and educational administration in Nagaland's private colleges.

Online databases and digital libraries: Platforms such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To examine the prevailing leadership styles in private colleges of Nagaland.

To identify a leadership model suited to the unique educational and cultural context of Nagaland.

Limitations

Absence of primary data limits firsthand perspectives from Nagaland's college leaders and faculty.

Variability in institutional reporting and limited published research on Nagaland's private colleges may affect comprehensiveness.

Leadership Styles in Private Colleges in Nagaland

In this section, the study examines the predominant leadership styles currently practiced in private colleges in Nagaland, drawing from secondary data and literature. Leadership styles within the educational context of

Nagaland are shaped by socio-cultural factors, traditional governance structures, and the operational models of private institutions. Understanding these leadership styles is crucial for evaluating their effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement.

Predominant Leadership Style: Based on the literature and case studies of private colleges in Nagaland, three key leadership styles are most commonly observed:

Authoritative Leadership

Characteristics: This style is characterized by centralized decision-making, where the principal or the head of the institution holds the ultimate authority. The leader sets clear directives and expects faculty and staff to follow without significant input from them.

Impact: While authoritative leadership can lead to quick decision-making and clarity, it often stifles creativity and innovation. Faculty members in such institutions feel disconnected from the decision-making process, leading to lower morale and a sense of powerlessness. The hierarchical nature of this style aligns with the traditional governance models prevalent in the region but limits institutional flexibility and responsiveness.

Transactional Leadership

Characteristics: In transactional leadership, the leader focuses on maintaining order through structured tasks, rewards, and punishments. Performance is closely monitored, and there is a clear delineation of responsibilities between management and faculty.

Impact: This style is more common in institutions where the focus is on maintaining operational efficiency rather than driving innovation or fostering personal development. While transactional leadership can be effective in ensuring that rules and regulations are followed, it often leads to a lack of initiative among staff, as there is little room for personal autonomy or professional growth. The reliance on rewards and penalties does not foster a culture of collaboration or long-term commitment.

Laissez-faire Leadership

Characteristics: Laissez-faire leadership is marked by a hands-off approach, where leaders provide minimal guidance or intervention. The institution's management operates with very little oversight, allowing faculty members to take the lead in most areas of governance and decision-making.

Impact: This style can lead to a lack of coherence and direction in college operations. While it may work in some academic environments where faculty are highly self-motivated, it can create confusion and inefficiency in settings where strategic leadership is essential. In Nagaland, the use of laissez-faire leadership may stem from a lack of administrative training and resource constraints, leading to an absence of clear policies or long-term institutional goals.

Hybrid Leadership Styles

Some private colleges in Nagaland adopt hybrid leadership styles, combining elements of the authoritative, transactional, and laissez-faire approaches. This blending allows leaders to adapt to the varied needs of their institution, but it also creates challenges in terms of consistency and clarity. For instance, a principal might follow an authoritative style in administrative matters but adopt a more transactional approach in academic performance monitoring.

Hybrid leadership may emerge due to the interplay of several factors:

Cultural dynamics: The influence of community-based leadership, where elders or church leaders may exert indirect influence on institutional decisions.

Resource constraints: Limited funds and infrastructure may necessitate a more top-down approach to ensure that goals are met.

Organizational inertia: A lack of clear leadership training or succession planning results in a blend of styles, often reflecting the personal leadership traits of individual administrators rather than a unified institutional strategy.

Leadership and Faculty Relations

The relationship between leadership styles and faculty satisfaction is critical to understanding the overall leadership climate in private colleges. Studies indicate that authoritative leadership is often linked to faculty dissatisfaction in Nagaland, as it prevents teachers from taking ownership of their work and contributing meaningfully to the institution's development. Faculty members in these colleges tend to feel undervalued and disengaged.

Conversely, transactional leadership can maintain order but may result in a "compliance-based" atmosphere, where faculty follow procedures but lack motivation for growth or innovation. This style may lead to high turnover, especially if faculty feel that their personal development is stunted by rigid policies.

The laissez-faire leadership style presents an interesting paradox in the context of Nagaland. While it provides autonomy to faculty members, it often lacks the structure needed to ensure academic standards are met consistently. In an environment with limited oversight, faculty may find it difficult to align with institutional goals, leading to fragmentation and inconsistency in educational quality.

The Role of Cultural Context in Leadership Styles

Nagaland's unique cultural and social context plays a significant role in shaping leadership styles in private colleges. The influence of traditional tribal governance structures, hierarchical relationships, and strong community values often permeates educational administration. For instance:

Tribal influence: The strong respect for elders and community leaders in Nagaland can influence the way authority is structured in colleges. College leaders, particularly in private institutions run by religious or tribal organizations, may adopt an authoritative or paternalistic approach to leadership, expecting faculty and staff to follow without question.

Religious leadership: Many private colleges in Nagaland are church-affiliated. Religious leaders often play a significant role in the governance of these institutions. This influence often leads to leadership models that prioritize tradition and community values over progressive or innovative educational practices.

Community-based decision-making: There is a preference for leadership that incorporates **community input**, though this is often not fully realized in practice. A blend of **transformational and participatory leadership styles** could help bridge the gap between hierarchical decision-making and community-driven processes.

The Need for Adaptable Leadership Styles

The research suggests that for private colleges in Nagaland to thrive, leadership must be adaptable to the region's specific educational and cultural context. The traditional, hierarchical styles must evolve into more transformational and participatory models that encourage faculty involvement in decision-making, foster innovation, and support long-term institutional growth. Leaders should focus on developing a shared vision for the institution, motivating staff through recognition and professional development, and creating an inclusive environment where diverse voices are heard.

Leadership Model

Based on the analysis of current leadership styles in private colleges in Nagaland, this study proposes a contextually relevant leadership model aimed at addressing the unique challenges and cultural dynamics of the region. The proposed model combines elements from transformational, participatory, and servant leadership theories, making it adaptable to the specific needs of Nagaland's private educational institutions.

Implementation of the Leadership Model

To implement this leadership model in Nagaland's private colleges, the following steps can be taken:

Training and Development Programs: Educate existing and future leaders on transformational, participatory, and servant leadership styles. Workshops, leadership seminars, and mentoring programs can be organized.

Inclusive Decision-Making Framework: Develop structures that allow for transparent and collaborative decision-making at all levels of the institution.

Feedback Mechanisms: Establish formal and informal channels (such as surveys, open meetings, and suggestion boxes) to collect feedback from faculty, staff, and students.

Community Engagement: Build strong partnerships with local tribal and religious communities to integrate cultural values into institutional governance.

Educational and Cultural Context of Nagaland

Nagaland's educational system is deeply embedded in its tribal traditions, religious influences, and geographical challenges. Understanding these factors is essential to understanding how leadership functions in private colleges in the region and why certain leadership styles are prevalent.

Tribal Influence and Governance: Nagaland is home to a diverse range of tribal communities, each with its own distinct social, cultural, and governance structures. These tribal systems often have a chief or an elder council that holds significant power within the community. The traditional governance models are hierarchical, with decision-making typically centralized in the hands of a few key figures. This hierarchical structure often reflects the leadership style found in Nagaland's private colleges, where authority is centralized in the hands of the principal or head of the institution.

Impact on College Leadership: Many private colleges in Nagaland are run by church or tribal organizations, where the influence of elders or church leaders plays a critical role in leadership decisions. This results in a more authoritative style of leadership, where decisions are often made by a small group of leaders without much input from faculty or students.

Cultural Sensitivity: Leaders must understand the importance of maintaining respect for tribal leadership structures while also adapting to modern educational needs. For example, involving tribal elders in decision-making processes, not as a dominant force but as advisors, can help bridge traditional leadership styles with the more modern demands of education.

Geographical and Infrastructure Challenges

Nagaland is a hilly and remote state, which presents significant logistical challenges for education. Limited access to technology, infrastructure, and educational resources affects both the leadership and management of private colleges. Many colleges in Nagaland are underfunded, leading to over-reliance on government grants, church donations, or student fees.

Impact on Leadership: The lack of infrastructure often leads to a centralized leadership model where the principal or head is tasked with making most decisions regarding college operations. This model is often

necessary for managing limited resources effectively but may reduce faculty and staff participation in governance.

Opportunity for Adaptation: Given the geographical isolation, colleges could benefit from innovative leadership that emphasizes digital literacy, distance learning, and **resource-sharing** among colleges in the region. Leaders must also be resourceful, finding ways to maximize existing resources and implement sustainable practices.

Impact of Leadership Styles

The leadership styles adopted in private colleges in Nagaland have a significant impact on various aspects of the institution, including faculty satisfaction, student performance, and overall institutional effectiveness. This section discusses how the predominant leadership styles influence both internal and external factors.

Impact on Faculty and Staff

Authoritative Leadership: Faculty members working under authoritative leaders often experience limited autonomy, which can reduce job satisfaction and creativity. While clear guidelines are helpful in certain contexts, over-centralization can create a disengaged workforce. Faculty may feel undervalued, leading to high turnover rates and a lack of investment in the college's long-term goals.

Transactional Leadership: Transactional leaders tend to reward compliance and punish non-compliance. This can create a stable, predictable environment but often at the cost of innovation and staff development. Faculty members may work within rigid structures but feel demotivated if their contributions go unrecognized or they have limited professional growth opportunities.

Laissez-faire Leadership: While it promotes autonomy, laissez-faire leadership may cause faculty members to feel unsupported in achieving institutional goals. In the absence of clear leadership, faculty might lack direction, which can impact the overall academic environment, especially in institutions that require strong academic leadership to maintain high standards.

Impact on Student Experience

The leadership style directly affects student engagement, academic outcomes, and campus culture:

Authoritative leadership often results in a rigid academic environment with clear rules and expectations, but it can stifle creativity and initiative among students.

Transactional leadership creates an outcome-focused environment where students perform based on rewards or penalties. However, this system may not motivate students to exceed expectations, focusing only on compliance rather than innovation.

Laissez-faire leadership may give students the freedom to pursue their academic interests but can also lead to inconsistency in academic standards or lack of guidance, affecting overall student performance.

Challenges in Leadership Styles

Private colleges in Nagaland face several challenges that are exacerbated by the leadership styles in practice. Understanding these challenges is critical for developing leadership models that can address the region's specific needs.

Lack of Faculty Involvement: A significant challenge in many colleges is the limited involvement of faculty members in decision-making processes. In hierarchical or authoritative leadership structures, faculties are often excluded from key discussions and decisions, which lead to a sense of disengagement and low morale. This lack of participatory leadership can have detrimental effects on both teaching quality and institutional culture.

Resistance to Change: Many private colleges in Nagaland are still rooted in traditional educational practices and governance structures. This resistance to change is often compounded by the authoritative leadership style, which stifles innovation and hinders the adoption of new teaching methods or modern educational technologies. Leaders who are more focused on maintaining the status quo are often reluctant to embrace reforms that could improve teaching standards, student engagement, or institutional growth.

Resource Constraints: Nagaland's private colleges often face severe resource limitations, including insufficient funding, outdated infrastructure, and lack of access to modern educational technology. These constraints create a challenging environment for leaders, especially those who might wish to implement more innovative or collaborative leadership models. Transactional leadership, in particular, might become the default as leaders try to maximize efficiency within the constraints of limited resources.

Cultural Barriers: The leadership styles in Nagaland's private colleges must also account for the region's strong cultural values, particularly the influence of tribal and religious leaders. The tribal governance structure in Nagaland often emphasizes hierarchy and respect for elders, which can make it difficult to implement more democratic or participatory leadership approaches. Leaders may struggle to balance traditional governance models with the modern educational needs of their institutions.

Low Faculty Retention: The challenges of poor leadership, limited professional development opportunities, and inadequate support for faculty contribute to high turnover rates in private colleges. Faculty members, particularly younger or more qualified educators may leave for better opportunities in other regions, further destabilizing the institution and reducing its academic quality.

Problems of The Study

While the study provides valuable insights into leadership styles in Nagaland's private colleges, there are inherent limitations and challenges that need to be acknowledged.

Lack of Primary Data: The reliance on secondary data limits the scope of the study, as it does not include firsthand accounts from college leaders, faculty, and students. This makes it difficult to capture the lived experiences of those directly affected by the leadership styles in private colleges. Future research could benefit from a more qualitative approach, such as interviews or surveys, to gather primary data and gain deeper insights into individual perceptions and experiences.

Limited Research on Nagaland's Educational System: Although studies on leadership in educational settings are abundant in India, there is a noticeable gap in research specifically focusing on Nagaland's private colleges. The region's unique socio-cultural dynamics require more in-depth studies to understand the relationship between leadership styles and institutional performance.

Variability Across Institutions: Nagaland's private colleges vary significantly in size, affiliation (church-based or independent), and resources. As such, generalizing leadership styles across the entire state can be problematic. Some colleges may have highly centralized, authoritative structures, while others may adopt more democratic models depending on their leadership and institutional culture. Future studies should account for these differences to provide a more nuanced analysis.

Scope of The Study

The scope of this study is primarily focused on examining leadership styles in private colleges in Nagaland, specifically addressing the challenges, impact, and contextual relevance of these leadership styles. The study is designed to provide a theoretical foundation for understanding how leadership functions in these institutions and to suggest practical recommendations for improving leadership practices.

Geographical Scope: The study covers Nagaland, a state in Northeast India, known for its distinct cultural, social, and educational context. Given the specific challenges faced by educational institutions in this region, the findings of this study are most relevant to private colleges operating within Nagaland.

Institutional Scope: The study focuses on private colleges in Nagaland, which are often influenced by religious or tribal affiliations and face specific governance challenges that differ from public institutions. These colleges are integral to the state's higher education landscape, particularly in providing educational opportunities in areas where public institutions are limited.

Temporal Scope: The study relies on secondary data and addresses leadership trends observed over the past decade (from 2010 to 2023). This temporal focus allows the study to examine current leadership models and challenges within the context of recent developments in Nagaland's education system.

Limitations of the Scope: While the study aims to cover leadership in a range of private colleges, the findings cannot be generalized to all educational institutions in Nagaland. Additionally, the reliance on secondary data limits the depth of insights into the personal experiences and perceptions of college leaders, faculty, and students.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The key findings from the study on leadership styles in private colleges in Nagaland are as follows:

Prevalence of Authoritative Leadership: Most private colleges follow an authoritative leadership style, with decision-making concentrated in the hands of the principal or head. This has led to a lack of faculty engagement and lower job satisfaction.

Challenges in Faculty Development: Limited opportunities for professional growth and lack of participation in decision-making have hindered faculty motivation and innovation.

Resistance to Change: Many institutions face resistance to modern teaching practices and innovation due to deeply rooted traditional leadership structures.

Resource Constraints: Financial limitations and inadequate infrastructure continue to impact leadership effectiveness and the overall academic environment.

Cultural Influence on Leadership: Tribal and religious governance models strongly influence leadership in private colleges, often limiting the flexibility needed for adaptive change.

CONCLUSION

The study confirms that the prevailing leadership styles in private colleges in Nagaland—largely authoritative and transactional—are insufficient in fostering an innovative and collaborative educational environment. These leadership models, while efficient in some aspects, restrict faculty engagement and limit the college's ability to adapt to changing educational needs. Leadership must evolve to be more participatory, transformational, and culturally sensitive to meet the specific needs of Nagaland's educational landscape.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to improve leadership styles in private colleges in Nagaland:

Adopt Transformational Leadership: College leaders should focus on inspiring and motivating faculty, creating a shared vision for the institution, and encouraging innovation in teaching and research.

Encourage Faculty Participation: Decision-making processes should be more inclusive, allowing faculty and staff to have a voice in shaping institutional policies and academic goals.

Invest in Professional Development: Colleges should provide continuous professional development opportunities for faculty to improve their skills and advance their careers.

Embrace Cultural Sensitivity: Leadership models should respect the cultural traditions of Nagaland while integrating modern educational practices.

Improve Resource Allocation: Institutions must focus on enhancing infrastructure, access to technology, and securing additional funding to improve operational efficiency and educational quality.

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