

## *Understanding Institutions: A Psycho-social Perspective*

### *Introduction*

Colleges and universities provide necessary training for individuals wishing to enter professional careers. They also strive to develop students' creativity, insight, reflective and analytical skills and abilities. By acquainting students with complex ideas in an intellectually and psychologically stimulating environment, colleges and universities can provide unique opportunities for personal enrichment while also preparing students for future careers.

Diverse professions like engineering, teaching, law, medicine, and information science require college education. The development of new technologies and the globalization of the world economy have created a high demand for workers with computer, communications, and other occupational skills that can be acquired only at colleges or universities. For example, computers and other new technologies have eliminated many low-skilled jobs in a variety of fields, but these same technologies have created widespread job opportunities for those who have the proper training. In addition, employers increasingly seek out college graduates who have gained the critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessary to adapt to changing economic conditions. Therefore it is very important for the college teacher to be empowered with the necessary skills and knowledge needed by him/her not only to provide academic technical and/or professional training/skills to the students, but to also nurture life skills like effective communication, time management, stress management and relationship management, which facilitate **holistic development** in them. This unit focuses on **capacity building** of the teachers which in turn would enable them to be **effective role models** for the students. The college teacher is simultaneously a member of the larger institution which is the college or the university and a significant entity in his/her classroom. Both these roles have their challenges and requirements. Let us now try to, in the present unit, understand the social, psychological and organizational dimensions of the institutional life of the college teacher and his/her relationship with the college system.

### *Learning outcomes*

After reading through this unit you will be able to

- understand the systems approach;
- differentiate between an open and closed system;

- develop skills in institutional evaluation;
- identify the coordinating mechanisms in institutions;
- differentiate between organizational culture and climate;
- know the concept of leadership and know when to use which style;
- differentiate between leadership versus management;
- know the attributes of an effective leader and appreciate the concepts of power and authority;
- develop a learning organization.

### *A systems approach to understanding institutions*

Systems are used throughout the physical, behavioural and information sciences to help in defining and understanding phenomena. They refer to a set of components surrounded by a boundary which accept inputs from other systems and discharge outputs into others as well. An institutional system is typically concerned with problems of relationships, of structure and of interdependence. In a college system these take the form of classrooms, equipment, teachers, students, staff and the concomitant human elements like feelings, jealousies, prejudices, stereotypes, ambitions, rivalries, beliefs, wants, needs and politics.

The constituents of a system thus include:

- the idea of a system-environment;
- a definable boundary;
- system inputs;
- system outputs;
- system functions and processes;
- the state of the system;
- system hierarchies;
- goal-directed behaviour;
- information and information flows.

There are two types of systems, the **closed** system and the **open** system. Let us try to understand them with the help of an activity.

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#### **Activity 1**

Read the statements given below carefully and categorise the characteristics into two groups; one depicting an open system and the other a closed system

1. is isolated from its environment and exists independently of it;
  2. is a system which interacts with its environment;
  3. nothing that goes on in the environment influences the behaviour of the system;
  4. receives new inputs constantly and is learning to cope;
  5. is self-sufficient; once set up all materials are re-cycled without loss of energy. It is a self-contained community;
  6. it imports and exports forms of energy and influences;
  7. stability is an important goal it seeks to achieve.
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**Scoring:**

Statements 1, 3, 5 are characteristics of a closed system.

Statements 2, 4, 6, 7 are characteristics of an open system

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Certain sciences deal with closed systems but in the social world, such a closed framework carries inherent problems. Without adaptation to external influences, a closed community reaches a point where self-containment becomes stifling and unhealthy. Colleges, not heeding changes in market forces, national curriculum, students' preferences, government policies and international trends will fall into the category of closed systems. They have been known to show a steady decline.

A college must strive to be an open system. It cannot shut itself off from its students, government, faculty, or competitors. An open system needs to be able to **cope with controllable and unexpected inputs** and deal with these in predictable and 'contingent' ways. Research has shown that institutions which fail to respond to current trends and other changes and fail to at least maintain their resource-base are liable to suffer from problems of **entropy** - losses of energy and a tendency to becoming disorganized.

Interaction with the environment is essential for the open, self-adaptive organization to renew itself. This environment has both internal and external components.

The internal components include:

- faculty and staff;
- classrooms, laboratories and facilities (the learning environment);
- current students;
- operating budget;
- various committees;
- research programs.

The external environment of the institution comprises of:

- prospective employers of graduates;
- parents and families of students;
- competing colleges;
- preparatory high schools;
- population demographics;
- funding agencies.

Let us now try to see how important each of these is through a larger analytical exercise.

***The internal survey of weaknesses and strengths***

Reflect and think for a moment: Do you observe any of the following signs and symptoms in your college / institution?

- low staff and faculty morale;
- poor building infrastructure;

sub-standard laboratory and workshop facilities;  
scarce instructional resources;  
institution receiving poor reviews from the community.

Administrators and teachers need to carry out an exercise like this to identify the institution's strengths and weaknesses. Internal audits help to reveal areas which require some changes. The potential and possibilities for new services and programmes may also emerge. Making a list of internal weaknesses could reveal areas that can be changed to improve the college, as well as throw light on other aspects that are beyond the institution's control.

**'Potential strengths'** of any organization could be numerous. We just need to identify, focus and highlight them. The list is endless and specific to each institution and situation. Some of the common ones may include:

- a reasonable tuition fee charged from students;
- strong and dedicated faculty with a high morale;
- good results in all spheres of activity;
- a strong reputation for providing the training required to get entry-level employment;
- diversity among the student populations.

A task like this is called a **'SWOT'** analysis. SWOT refers to **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities** and **threats**. It is useful for institutions to conduct it, since it brings to the forefront matters of strength and provides cues to the factors which preserve the morale and societal reputation of the institution and also identifies areas where rethinking and change need to be contemplated.

The assessment of strengths and weaknesses are also facilitated through surveys, focus groups, interviews with current and past students, and other knowledgeable sources. Once weaknesses and strengths are delineated, it would be appropriate to reconfirm these items. It should be recognized that different perceptions may exist depending on the representative group consulted and care and caution must thus be used to ensure adequacy of representation.

### ***External survey of threats and opportunities***

As has already been mentioned, all the institutions are embedded in society which in turn influences them. Changes in society have a direct bearing on the institution. We thus need to focus our attention on the external threats and opportunities which exist. We must understand that the external look is complementary to the internal self-study. National and regional influences as well state and local concerns are of paramount importance when deciding what new programmes need to be added, or which existing ones need to be modified, or removed. Information about the current educational climate, demographic changes, and employment and high school graduation rates are also important. A multitude of sources which need to be tapped include parents and community leaders, local newspapers, national news magazines, higher education journals, conferences, the local advisory councils, etc. Each of these is a potential source of highly valuable information on the threats and opportunities in the institutional system.

The threats in the system come in various forms, like increasingly restrictive budgets for education, an anticipated cut in state or U.G.C. funding, changes adopted by nearby universities, a decreasing number of high school graduates in the region and in a particular course or overcrowding in another unanticipated course. The opportunities usually emerge from changing demands and aspirations, from social change and from public vision.

It should be recognized that '**opportunities**' and '**threats**' are '**not absolute**'. What might at first seem to be an opportunity may not emerge as such, when considered against the resources of the institution or the expectations of society. The greatest challenge in the SWOT method could probably be to **make a correct judgement** that would benefit both the institution and the community.

Let us now in the next section focus on forces within the institution.

### ***Institutional culture and organizational climate***

There are two distinct forces that greatly influence any institution. These are its **culture** and **climate**. Understanding what they mean and symbolize is very important since in a sense they embody the **spirit** and **identity** of the institution. Let us now try to see what they mean.

**Culture** represents the **shared expectations** and **self-image** of the organization. It is a combination of the founders, past leadership, current leadership, crises, events and history of the institution. It refers to the **routines, rituals, and values** that create **tradition** or the 'way things are done'. Each organization has its own distinctive culture. The culture is the deeply rooted nature of the organization that is a result of long-held, formal and informal systems, rules, traditions, and customs. The **collective vision** and **common folklore** that define the institution are a reflection of its culture. Individual leaders cannot easily create or change culture because culture is a part of the identity of the organization.

The **climate**, on the other hand, is the **feel** of the **organization**, the individuals and the **shared perceptions** and **attitudes** which they hold. Climate is a short-term phenomenon created by the current leadership. This individual perception of the 'feel of the organization' comes from what the people believe, about the activities that occur in the organization. These activities influence both **individual and team motivation** and **satisfaction**. Such activities include answers to the following questions:

- How well does the leader clarify the priorities and goals of the organization?
- What is expected of him/her?
- What is the system of recognition, rewards, and punishments in the organization?
- How competent are the leaders?
- Are leaders free to make decision?
- What will happen if the leader makes a mistake?

Organizational climate is directly related to the leadership and management style of the leader. It is based on the values, attributes, skills, actions, as well as the priorities of the leader. Culture influences the characteristics of

the climate by its effect on the actions and thought processes of the leader. Climate represents the beliefs about the **feel of the organization** by its members. For example, the ethical climate is the 'feel of the organization' about the activities that have ethical content, or those aspects of the work environment that constitute ethical behavior. It is the feel about whether we do things right, or the feel of whether we behave the way we ought to behave. The behavior (character) of the leader is the most important factor that impacts on the climate.

### **Self-assessment**

1. *Every institution be it a school or college has a distinct culture which has a tremendous influence on the life and learning in the institution. In order to know the features of your college culture, answer the following questions about its culture:*
  - i) *Does it encourage both new and experienced teachers to express their views in faculty meetings?*
  - ii) *Do experienced teachers offer active and willing support to new teachers?*
  - iii) *Do high-achieving students have to struggle against unsavoury peer attitudes?*
  - iv) *Do parents actively participate in college issues?*

How healthy is my college's culture?

A healthy culture is typically characterized by the following dimensions:

- collegiality
- experimentation
- high expectations
- trust and confidence
- tangible support
- reaching out to the knowledge base
- appreciation and recognition
- caring among members
- involvement in decision making
- protection of what is important
- traditions, and
- honest and open communication.

Whether an institution will in reality embody a healthy culture is in fact dependent on the person who leads the institution and his/her style of functioning. This leads us to the whole issue of leadership in terms of what it means, how it is implemented and why it is important on this.

Let us now focus the decision on this. We will begin with the concept of leadership.

### ***Concept of leadership***

Before we get started, let us try to define leadership. Reflect and answer the following questions:

1. What is leadership?
2. Name the person who, according to you, is an effective leader?
3. In deciding who was an effective leader, what did you observe as the person's attributes or what he/she does?
4. List the qualities and characteristic behaviours of this effective leader as observed by you in various settings?

This task was intended at enabling you to put your experience related to leadership together in order that you begin with both a conceptual and experiential base.

### *Leadership defined*

According to the traditional definitions, leadership is **an interpersonal influence directed toward the achievement of a goal or goals**. Three important parts of this definition include the terms, **interpersonal, influence, and goal**.

- Interpersonal means between persons. Thus, a leader has more than one person or a group to lead.
- Influence is the power to affect others.
- Goal is the end one strives to attain.

In contemporary settings, leadership is defined as 'a dynamic relationship' based on mutual influence and common purpose between leaders and collaborators in which both are moved to higher levels of motivation and moral development as they affect real, intended change. Three important parts of this definition are the terms '**relationship**', '**mutual**', and '**collaborators**'. Here,

- Relationship is the connection between people.
- Mutual means shared, in common.
- Collaborators are those who cooperate or work together.

### *Leadership as distinct from management*

In conceptualizing leadership, it is very important to understand how it differs from management. In any institutional system both management and leadership co-exist. Let us try to understand their relationship and their distinctiveness.

**Management** is the process of **setting and achieving the goals** of the **institution** through the functions **planning, organizing, directing** (or leading), and **controlling**. Management deals more with carrying out the institution's goals and maintaining equilibrium. For example, if a principal is appointed by the college he /she is given formal authority to direct the activity of others in fulfilling organizational goals. Thus, leading is a major part of his/her job. Besides this, they must also plan, organize, and control.

In contrast, **leadership** deals with the **interpersonal aspects** of a head's job, whereas planning, organizing, and controlling deal with the administrative aspects. Leadership deals with **change, inspiration, motivation, and influence**.

The key point in differentiating between leadership and management is the idea that employees, faculty members and students willingly follow leaders because they want to, not because they have to. Leaders may not possess the formal power to reward or sanction performance. However, subordinates

give the leader power by complying with what he or she requests. Leadership is thus a very significant psychological institution. Let us now focus on types of leaders and styles of leadership.

### ***Styles of leadership***

**Leadership style** is the manner and approach of **providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people**. There are three different styles of leadership: **authoritarian** (autocratic), **participative** (democratic), and **laissez faire** (delegative or free reign).

Let us try to understand them.

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### **Activity 2**

Read the following statements carefully and tick the ones which characterize your style of leadership.

1. For you the task, is of paramount importance.
2. For you both the task and relationships are of paramount importance.
3. You are not unduly concerned about the task or relationships.
4. You are very strong on schedules.
5. You lead by setting a positive example.
6. You do not like to interference in the affairs of others.
7. You expect people to do what they are told without question or debate.
8. Your endeavor is to foster a team environment in which all team members can reach their highest potential, both as team members and as people.
9. You use the proverbial 'delegate and disappear' management style.
10. When something goes wrong, you tend to focus on who is to blame rather than concentrate on exactly what is wrong and how to prevent it.
11. You encourage your team members to reach team goals as effectively as possible.
12. You allow the team members to do whatever they wish.
13. You are intolerant of what you see as dissent.
14. You work tirelessly to strengthen the bonds among the various members.
15. You prefer to detach yourself from the team.

### **Scoring**

Statements 1, 4,7,10, 13 indicate an authoritarian (autocratic) style of leadership  
Statements 2, 5,8,11, 14 indicate a participative (democratic) style of leadership  
Statements 3, 6,9,12, 15 indicate a laissez faire (delegative or free reign) style of leadership

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Let us now see what each of these terms specifically mean.

#### **Authoritarian (autocratic)**

This leader tells his/her subordinates what he/she wants done and how he/she wants it done, without getting the advice from them. In this case it is difficult for subordinates to contribute or develop. Some of the appropriate

conditions to use this style are, when you have all the information to solve the problem, you are short on time, and your team members are well motivated. Please note that the authoritarian style does not include yelling, using demeaning language, and leading by threats and abuse of power. This is an abusive, unprofessional style of leadership.

### **Participative (democratic)**

This leader includes one or more team members in the decision making process in determining what to do and how to do it. However, the leader maintains the final decision making authority. This is normally used when you have some of the information, and your employees have some of it. This allows them to become part of the team and allows you to make a better decision. This style leads to the most productive teams and decisions. Please note that using this style is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of strength.

### **Laissez faire ('delegative or free reign')**

In this style, the leader allows the employees to make the decisions. However, he/she is still responsible for the decisions that are made. This is used when employees are able to analyze the situation and determine what needs to be done and how to do it.

The most desirable place for a leader to be at most times in any institution is **high on task** and **high on relationships**, which is the **democratic style**. However, do not entirely dismiss the other two. Certain situations might call for one of the other three to be used at times. For example, by adopting the laissez faire style, you allow your team members to gain self-reliance. You can be an authoritarian leader to instill a sense of discipline in an unmotivated worker. By carefully studying the situation and the forces affecting it, you will know at what points along the axis you need to be in in order to achieve the desired result.

### **Positive and negative leaders**

Have you observed how you approach people, your students and co-workers? The differences in the way people approach others indicates whether the leader is a positive leader or a negative one. Let us try to understand this concept with the help of an activity.

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#### **Activity 3**

Given below are two case vignettes. Read them carefully and answer the following questions.

#### **Situation 1**

Dr Ravi Gupta gives his faculty members' independence to do what they think is important for the college's betterment. He never fails to appreciate work done well. If any department makes a significant contribution due credit is given to the students and the faculty members. At the same time if his team members are not well versed in the concerned area, he educates them, does not criticise them. His students and faculty members are committed to their tasks and are high on motivation.

## **Situation 2**

Dr Soni only emphasises upon the negatives of an individual. He is constantly criticising his staff members and students. Due to his attitude no one likes to take any initiative and are low in spirit. He acts in a domineering and superior way with people. He believes that people have an inherent dislike for work and will avoid it whenever possible, and the only way to get things done is through penalties, such loss of job, days off without pay, reprimands in front of others, etc. He feels his authority is increased by frightening everyone into higher levels of efficiency.

1. Which situation depicts a positive leader and which a negative one?
2. What is the difference between the two leaders?
3. Which leader are you able to identify with and why?
4. What are the attributes of the two leaders?

It must have been clear to you, that case 1 epitomizes a positive leader, and case 2, a negative one.

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### ***Attributes of an effective leader***

Having understood the concept of positive and negative leaders, let us now try to identify the attributes of an effective leader.

The basis of good leadership is honourable character and selfless service to the organization. An effective leader concentrates on what he/ she is [be] (beliefs and character), what he/she knows (job, tasks, human nature), and what he/she does (implement, motivate, provide direction). To be a good leader, there are things that you must be, know, and do. Some of them are:

- be a professional; examples: be loyal to the organization, perform selfless service, and take personal responsibility.
- be a professional who possesses good character traits; examples; honesty, competence, candour, commitment, integrity, courage, straightforwardness, imagination.
- know the four factors of leadership - follower, leader, communication, situation.
- know yourself: your strengths and weakness, knowledge, and skills.
- know human nature: for example, human needs and emotions, and how people respond to stress.
- know your job; example: be proficient and be able to train others in their tasks.
- know your organization; examples: where to go for help, its climate and culture, who the unofficial leaders are.
- do provide direction; examples: goal setting, problem solving, decision making, planning.
- do implement; examples: communicating, coordinating, supervising, evaluating.
- do motivate; examples: develop morale and spirit in the organization, train, coach, counsel.

## *Need for leadership*

Leadership is an important area today in institutions and particularly for teachers since they are expected to teach for understanding and not just well enough for students to pass a test. Teaching for understanding means helping students 'get the habits' of thinking mathematically, solving problems scientifically, reasoning, seeing artistically, reading critically, writing persuasively, and communicating clearly. We know that all students, not just a few, must acquire these habits, if they are to participate as adults in a knowledge-based economy and a self-governing society.

These new expectations mean that our colleges must change and that teachers must help change them, requiring new roles for teachers.

Today, the role of teachers includes the ability to:

- make clear to parents and others, as well as to students themselves, what every student needs to know and is able to do;
- communicate more with parents and families how they can help students reach higher academic standards;
- integrate technology into instruction;
- help improve assessments and use the results to improve teaching and learning;
- work with various partners—colleges, businesses, community groups, and volunteers;
- collaborate with other teachers;
- participate in teams and institutional -level decision making; and
- make ongoing learning part of their job.

Within a range of leadership roles, college teachers can contribute a distinct perspective and college education that is critical to improving the quality of teaching and the amount that students learn. Teachers have front-line knowledge of classroom issues and the culture of colleges, and they understand the support they need to do their jobs well.

Their contributions are critical to making education reforms efforts succeed. When teachers participate in improving education, the changes are more likely to work. Without their contributions, teachers often pretend to comply with the new expectations, but conduct business as usual, once the classroom door is closed.

Having studied about the institution, its climate, culture, and the concept and style of leadership and its impact on students and co-workers, you now need to know about the concept of power and authority and how they influence an institution. This section will highlight upon issues related to power and the bases of power, so that you are able to know what your powers in the college and institution, are.

## *Concept of power and authority*

Everyone has power in one form or another and it is by exercising this power that organizations get things accomplished. For example in an institution, the Principal, Dean, Head of Department who are capable of achieving their

objectives independently of others are said to possess power and strength. When these 'strong persons' in turn involve and incorporate others into their plans and activities, they are making use of power. Involving faculty members in setting objectives and making decisions as it relates to their jobs empowers everyone, and results in greater job satisfaction and commitment, as well as increased efficiency.

The other **related** concept is that of **authority** which is derived from **position**. The concepts of power and authority are often the basis for personal motivation from two perspectives: the person wielding the power and the authority, and the person who acts in response to another person's manipulation of power and authority. A teacher's personal power could include job knowledge, personal influence, interpersonal skills, and ability to get results, empathetic ability, persuasive ability, and physical strength.

Colleges are largely social constructions within which power, relationships, attitudes, values and perceptions of decision-makers are key factors and influences. They are characterized to some extent by ownership, membership, control and language. Social power is manifested through the exertion and ability of faculty members, dean or head of the department and other stakeholders, as they generate and maintain their position and relationships. These matters are human and illustrate human frailty, skill, ability, learning capacity, opportunities and willingness to engage, control over passions and self-centeredness or altruism and virtue, ingenuity and disingenuousness.

### ***Bases of power***

This refers to what the power holder has that he /she uses to get others to do something they otherwise would not have done. When analysing events and influences, it is equally important to consider how people, over time construe their situation, differently. Largely, there are six sources of power:

- legitimate;
- coercive;
- reward;
- expert;
- referent; and
- information.

Let us engage in an activity to understand this further.

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### **Activity 4**

Read the situations given below carefully and indicate the bases of power in each situation.

1. Dr Ragini is a person of few words. She wants everyone to submit to whatever she says. If some teacher contradicts her viewpoint, he/she is dismissed. She always defines the rights, privileges and rules of behaviour for all faculty members.
2. Prof Radha has a dynamic and charming personality. She is always able to influence everyone around her with her charismatic personality and in-depth knowledge in various contemporary topics.

3. Dr Rajiv Arora wanted to change the syllabus keeping in mind the contemporary need of the time. So, in order to seek the consensus of all the lecturers and the principal he organized a staff meeting. There he presented his ideas and his views. Everyone was impressed by his expertise in the area and they agreed to look into the issue.
  4. Dhirendra, a lecturer in philosophy agreed to do research work for the department of Archeology when he was told that he would not only get a raise, but also become the dean of that institution.
  5. Dr. Sanjana uses the classroom rules like who is allowed to enter the class, get positions of responsibility, etc., to control deviant students.
  6. Rajiv Sharma is the principal of his college. Everyone feels that he knows nothing about administration and is very theoretical in his approach. Yet all his colleagues have to follow his instructions.
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The situations address the following bases of power.

Situation 1: **Coercive power** or the threat of sanctions. It is dependent on fear and includes, but is not limited to the ability to dismiss, assign undesirable work, or restriction of movement.

Situation 2: **Referent power** which refers to a person who has desirable resources or personal traits. It results in admiration and the desire to emulate.

Situation 3: **Expert power** that comes from expertise, skill, or knowledge.

Situation 4: **Reward Power** which results in people doing what is asked because they desire positive benefits or rewards. Rewards can be anything a person values (praise, raises, and promotions).

Situation 5: **Information power** which is based upon the persuasiveness or content of a communication and is independent of the influencing individual

Situation 6: **Legitimate power** which is a result of the position a person holds in the organizational hierarchy.

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### ***Delegation of power***

Another issue which goes hand in glove with the concept of power, is its **delegation**. It involves reciprocal obligations and supportive behaviours on both sides.

In delegation of power, it should not be taken for granted or assumed that the task has been done as, over zealous delegation can result in job overload, stress and exploitation for the person doing the job. Good delegation is the ability to provide good content and structure to a job and let someone get on with a job without hindrance.

### ***Institutions as learning organizations***

For the growth and evolution of an institution in the right direction, it is important that it perceives itself as a learning organization. Let us try to know the concept and characteristics of a learning organization.

**Learning organization** is the phrase given to describe organizations dedicated to learn new things and using that knowledge to become more effective. Within these learning organizations, all decisions are based on the desire to learn and gain knowledge as well as to achieve short-term performance.

### *Characteristics of learning organizations*

These organizations place a lot of emphasis on:

- How to develop and understand **why things work** and how they can be **refined**.
- There is an attitude of **continuous learning** that supports the workplace environment. Resources are invested in people to promote learning, training programs, analyze processes and evaluate outcomes.
- Leaders recognize the **need to develop people** at every level of the organization by promoting learning and continuous improvement.
- The **environment is positive** in nature. Such an environment also benefits the worker outside of the workplace in a personal way.
- A strategic focus is placed on **discovering new knowledge** and imitating the **best practices of others**.
- Leaders ensure that whatever new knowledge has been discovered is **used effectively**
- Leaders understand that they have a vital role to play in **nurturing the right environment**.
- There is a **personal development flavour** in the manifesto of the organisation and an effort to integrate the needs of the individuals, with the needs of the organisation.

### *Learning climate*

In a learning institution, the members of higher authorities encourage members to undertake projects and experiments in learning, learning from experience and continuous improvement, problem-solving and the cycle of doing, reflecting and thinking, so that **action learning** becomes the norm. In order to achieve this, they should take a lead in questioning themselves, see mistakes as learning opportunities, without generating a confrontation, a blame-culture, or a you are fired situation.

Trying new ideas and methods may not always work, but if tried as a **conscious experiment**, there are learning benefits. Continuous improvement should be emphasized, and doing better should be the target.

### *Self-development opportunities for all*

A learning organisation gives its members access to resources and facilities for **self-development**. A culture of self-development offers support, guidance and feedback (two-way). Members are encouraged to manage their own learning and development. courses, workshops, seminars, self-learning materials, self-development forums and processes. Development groups, coaching/mentoring, counselling, time-off to study, opening doors for new experiences, projects, visits, encouragement of broad based education for life and not just task specific training are made available to all

that institutions strive to become them. Let us see how this can be made possible.

### *Guidelines to promote a learning organization*

Here are some guidelines to promote a learning organization:

1. **Demonstrate an appreciation for learning and flexibility** - Each activity should be examined to evaluate if it is still needed, or how it can be improved. Change is more acceptable to people who develop the confidence and pride in their capacity to learn new things. Encourage others to view their practices with flexibility and innovation.
2. **Shape learning opportunities from surprises and failures** - Most people tend to ignore or discount sudden information that doesn't fit their expectations or assumptions of how things work. Yet, some of the most impressive discoveries of humankind have come about by accident. Encourage others to use unexpected results to re-examine their assumptions and expectations. Endorse these opportunities as a way to learn something new and apply it.
3. **Promote and facilitate learning by individuals** - Organizations can only learn when individual members of that organization are learning. As a leader, cultivate a culture that honours and respects individual learning. This includes the strong cultural values of personal development and lifelong education. Programs that provide financial assistance for outside education promote this value and reward individual workers who support it.
4. **Encourage experimentation** - Small-scale experiments provide a chance to try out new ideas without the risk involved in major change. People are also less sceptical and more objective to try new approaches on a small scale rather than completely abandon traditional practices. Of course, how effective the experiment will be, depends on how well it is designed and executed.
5. **Acquire the 'best practices' of others** - Identify and adopt the best practices of successful organizations. This can be a useful source of innovation. However, be flexible enough to modify or evaluate the relevance of these practices for your particular organization. Don't simply be an imitator, but improve and invent new approaches from the best practices of others.

### *Types of decision making*

Of critical importance to the health and effectiveness of any institution, is the structure and nature of decision making processes. The two possibilities in this regard are **centralization** and **decentralization**.

**Centralization** is the degree to which decision-making is **concentrated** in the hands of the top management. **Decentralization** is the extent to which decision-making authority is **pushed down** the organization structure and shared with many lower-level employees. Centralized organizations have more levels of management with narrow spans of control. Employees are not free to make decisions. Decentralized organizations have fewer levels of management with wide spans of control giving employees more freedom of action. All other things being equal, a wide span of control is more efficient because it requires fewer managers. However, it is important to recognize that, at some point, effectiveness may decline.

The current trend is towards broadening decentralization. As competition intensifies, the need for organizations to be responsive increases.

### **Summary**

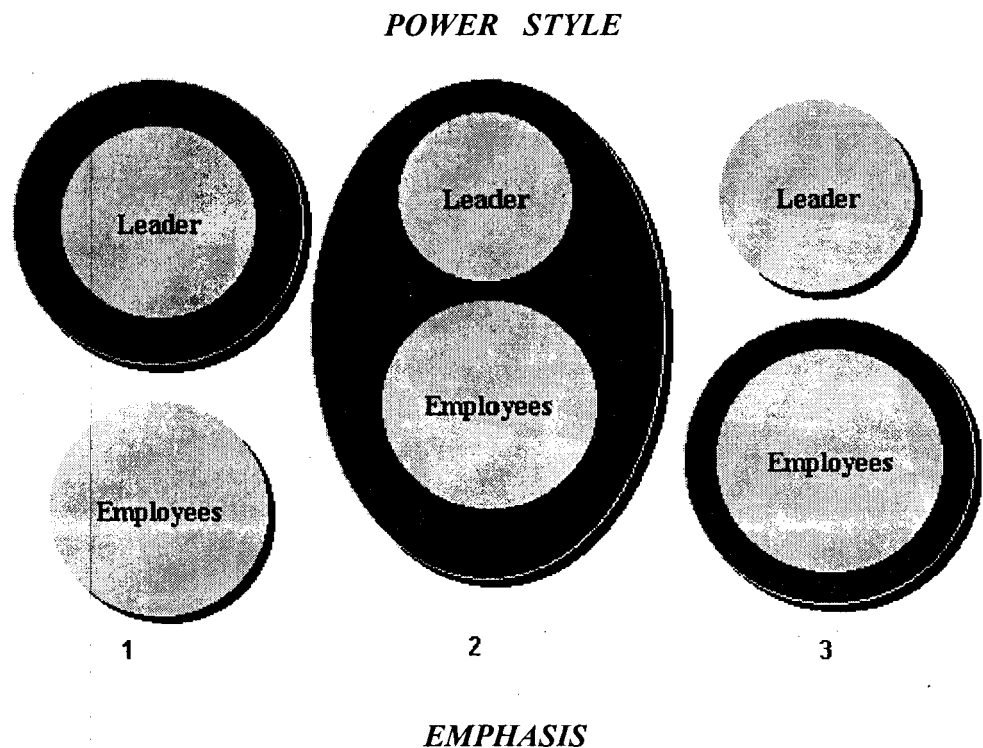
Any institution, be it a college or a university is an open-system which interacts with and adapts to forces and pressures emanating from its external environment. The external world may exhibit stable or turbulent influences to which the institution system must respond if it is to do what it sets out to do i.e. satisfy its mission and its maintenance and improvement objectives. However, knowing about the internal aspects and getting into an introspective and analytical process about them from time to time is equally critical. A SWOT analysis is recommended.

In institutional development, leadership is a key factor which determines its course of development. It is a complex process by which a person influences others to accomplish a mission, task, or objective and directs the college/university in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent. A person carries out this process by applying his/her leadership attributes (belief, values, ethics, character, knowledge, and skills). If you are a principal or head of department, by virtue of your position you have the authority to accomplish certain tasks and objectives in the institution. However this power does not make you a leader...it simply makes you the boss. Leadership makes people want to achieve high goals and objectives, while, on the other hand, bosses tell people to accomplish a task or objective.

For healthy institutional growth, envisioning the organisation as a learning organisation is very important. It sets the tone and readiness for productive development

### **Unit-end exercises**

1. Study the diagram below carefully and answer the following questions:



- The diagram indicates the relationship between which dimensions?
  - Identify which one is autocratic style, which one is participative style and which is laissez faire style.
  - What are the qualities of each of the three leadership styles?  
(Answer: Autocratic, democratic, laissez faire)
2. Introspect on your own institution and identify the nature of organisational culture and climate which exists. Give illustrative examples to support your position.
  3. If you were asked to set up an ideal college, what would be some of the organisational principles you would adopt and why?
  4. "For Indian Colleges, decentralization as a form of governance is the only strategy which should be adopted." What are your views in this regard.

### ***Suggested readings***

Kevin Freiberg and Jackie Freiberg, (1996) *NUTS! Southwest Airlines' Crazy Recipe for Business and Personal Success*, Bard Press.

Newstrom, John W. and Davis, Keith (1993) *Organizational Behavior - Human Behavior at Work*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Raven B.H. (1998) *Interpersonal Influence and Social Power*, Los Angeles: University of California.