



# Leadership Elasticity Enhancing Style-Flex for Leadership Equilibrium

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## Abstract

*Leadership elasticity enhances leadership style flexibility and mobility to enable educational leaders to maintain appropriate leadership equilibrium. The essential of leadership elasticity contributes towards organizational effectiveness by followership's maintenance through appropriate expansion and contraction of relations and task behavioural orientation simultaneously, arrive at optimally balanced leadership equilibrium. This study aimed to explain leadership elasticity in achieving leadership equilibrium through relations and task behaviour orientating style-flex by assimilating the followership variables of task, timing, people, and trust. The study suggest both relations and task behavioural orientation is essential for a leader to bring about organizational effectiveness and social harmony. Moreover, Leadership elasticity expanding toward relations-oriented enabled less elasticity, while, expansion toward task-oriented behaviour enabled high elasticity. Leadership contextual intelligence and contextual experiences are both essential in identifying the variations in the contextual settings. This enables appropriate leadership approach of style-flex through the leadership behavioural orientations towards timing, trusting, tasking and people. The variations in the degree of elasticity can cause disturbances by frequent behavioural changes in an attempt to fit in the situation. This multi attempt behavioural changes can be the major cause of style-drift.*

**Keywords** :Leadership Elasticity; Leadership readiness; leadership behavioural pattern; relations and Task-oriented behaviour; leadership appropriateness; leadership flexibility; leadership style-flex; leadership style-fix; Leadership style-drift; leadership multi-style flex

## Introduction

Educational leadership is considerably becoming an important aspect in educational settings. This is because; complexity in educational leadership has generated complexity in leadership approaches in schools. Leadership is both an *Art and a Science*. Leadership is *science* because it assimilates psychological aspects such as, intelligence, emotion, belief, personality, morale, values, perceptions and so forth, which is systematically processed towards sensitivity and responsiveness. As an *art*, leadership is a process of articulating and orienting the psychological paradigm through their behaviour within the followership socio-psycho economical domain to gain leadership effectiveness and success. Most importantly, all individuals are different. Therefore, incorporating psychological paradigm towards articulating into socio-psycho-economical domain can generate complexity in leadership approaches within leaders and sub-leaders in educational settings.

According to Sergiovannie (2001, 1994), when he asserts that leadership in education has no identity and is everywhere in education, this further leads complexity in educational settings, where many individuals plays a part of leadership (Mulford 2003). For example, students leadership, where few students are capable of demonstrating their leadership role to fellow students, who are often given the title of various kind by the schools (Black et. al 2014, Dugan and Komives (2007). Another example would be the pedagogical leadership (Male and Palaiologou 2016, Brandon et al 2016, MacNeill et al 2003), where teachers play an important role in disseminating knowledge to the students and sometimes to fellow co-workers as mentors (Leithwood et.al 2004). Most importantly, principals as school leaders, who are responsible with administrations and management has significant contribution of leadership either negatively or positively (Dembowski 2006). Moreover, leadership importance and presence is also essential for teacher's professional development (Bredeson 2000). The

complexity of leadership can be constructed in different approaches and styles. One of the essential style to unwind the approach complexity can be simplified by applying leadership elasticity. *Leadership elasticity* enables leadership readiness to remain *style-flex* towards stretching the behaviours by contraction and expansion of elasticity to prevent *style-drift* (Rajbhandari 2013).

Although, leadership elasticity and leadership flexibility are seemingly to be overlapping, they are not the same. Leadership elasticity prevent style-drift, whereas, leadership flexibility can enables pinning towards *style-fix*. Despite, style-fix may be desirable; the contextual variations can allows the leader to remain mobile by instigating for style-flex, which is essential. This is also because; followers and the context are not static. However, high style-flex can generate style-drift Reddins (1972). Therefore, dynamism of follower's readiness and contextual variables causes situational variations that instigate for the leadership dynamism to implement *practical intelligence* (Sternberg 2000). Moreover, leadership elasticity and leadership flexibility are also not mutually exclusive. Leadership elasticity is more balanced towards twining the leadership behaviours from preventing style – drift with an attempt to apply multiple *style-flexes* by the leaders.

Despite most actors in educational settings exhibits leadership, these sub leaders, such as pedagogical leadership, and student's leadership (Anderson and Lu 2016) are under the wings of the schools leaders. Theses sub leaders has their own ways of demonstrating their leadership which may not be the same as the educational leadership. Although leadership is complex, school environmental settings can be even more complex, which is assimilated with micro and mini-micro variables, while taking into consideration of the role of special students, who demonstrate their leadership differently (Rajbhandari 2016). These aspects of variables can be the major causes for instigating variations in the context. These variations could be small or big, important or urgent, conscious or sub-conscious.

For generating leadership effective, school leadership needs to understand these immediate variables and create the necessary course of actions and maintain tolerance by applying *Referee Leadership Styles* for change and outcomes (Rajbhandari 2013). Nevertheless, changes are necessary, constant and inevitable (Ullah 2012, Shen 2008, Meussig 1969), which further enables the leadership approach to balance between the needy, urgent and important. This could be maintained by enhancing the leadership elasticity by articulating leadership behavioural pattern of both task and relations-oriented behaviour. These patterns of leadership behaviour are assimilated through understanding the immediate contextual variations within the school environment, pedagogical leadership groups and students group for enhancing maintenance of followership domain.

Understanding the immediate contextual variation can favour in enhancing competences of leadership elasticity by enabling leadership appropriateness and readiness for flexibility and mobility to maintain *leadership equilibrium* that is relevance to context and followers readiness (Rajbhandari 2014). Leadership elasticity of expansion and contraction of leadership behavioural orientation towards task and relations enriches leadership appropriateness that best fits in the immediate context.

### **Leadership Elasticity Enhancing Style Flex**

Leadership elasticity is constructed through leadership behavioural orientation towards expansion and contraction of elasticity articulating the task and relations behaviour aligned to contextual settings. Moreover, leadership ability and competences enables leaders to understand the contextual settings, which initiates an interventions towards articulating their behavioural orientation to gain followership readiness. This dexterity of articulating leadership elasticity enables vertical and horizontal mobility, furthermore, generating

consistencies of orienting either elasticity expansion (increase) or contraction (decrease) of task and relations behaviour. This enables leaders to arrive at style appropriateness through contextual experiences and contextual intelligence (Rajbhandari 2013). Simultaneous expansion and contraction of elasticity is feasible, however, essential of expansion and contraction of leadership elasticity are context based and lies within the ability of leaders individual personality. Each contextual variation offers multi varieties of issues. This therefore enables leadership elasticity to either expand or contract that best suits the immediate context.

Weyers (2002) claims the importance of concentration and wisdom of leaders supplement elasticity. Leader's concentration offer self-aware enabling them to tune with the follower, whereas wisdom offer the leaders to adapt appropriate style relevant to followers needs. This can be initiated through building trust, teaming people with task as a response to follower's readiness. Leadership elasticity requires high competences in self-mastery and self-leadership to gain followership readiness.

Therefore, leadership is a power of interacting with confident and building trust in influencing people to collaborate and beguiling individual, groups and team in achieving common goal and producing social harmony amongst and between within a contextual settings. Weyers (2002) expressed that leadership elasticity requires leader's concentration of being self-aware to tune with followers readiness. Moreover, leadership elasticity also requires a degree of wisdom that enables the leader's to choose the most appropriate of leadership style to meet with the followers needs. Furthermore, optimum flexibility (Stephen 2007; Moerschell 2009) can be achieved with leadership elasticity to maintain leadership equilibrium (Rajbhandari 2013).

### **Leadership Elasticity Responsiveness and Sensitivity to Behavioural Equilibrium**

Leadership elasticity is a responsiveness to sensitivity towards expansion and contraction of behavioural orientation in meeting the follower's readiness. This is initiated by orienting either high on relations-oriented by incorporating contextual experiences or high on task-orientations by incorporating contextual intelligence. Understanding the immediate variation in the context is apparently a pivotal factor. The degree of leadership elasticity is further determined by the leader's personality, competences, skills, ability, knowledge and psychological paradigm. The awareness of degree of variations in the context provides constant feasible outcome eventually leading to school success through leadership effectiveness.

Generating awareness to the degree of variation in the context is essential for leadership competences, which provoke for leadership elasticity. However, Leadership elasticity is sensitive and responsive with the leader's personality. Leadership elasticity of expansion with relations-oriented has less elasticity, this is because relations orientation does not enable the leaders for initiating task oriented behaviour due to leaders personality crises. Articulating expansion toward task-oriented behaviour allows high elasticity, this is because it enables the leaders to initiate relation-oriented behaviour in much easier way as this orientation can be accepted and admired by the followership domain.

Therefore, leadership flexibility has high elasticity of switching the behaviour from task-oriented to relation-oriented, but leadership flexibility has less elasticity while switching from relation-oriented to task-oriented behaviour. This is also because it is much easier for leader to switch towards relational approaches by adopting the task oriented behaviour, which enables easy stretching back and forth of behavioural articulation. In doing this, leadership behavioural orientation is easily accepted and admired by the followership within the contextual settings. However, behavioural orienting from relation to task may illustrate in

weaker personality of a leader, while, it may not be accepted by the followership domain. This is due to the fear of losing a grip of comforts and strong cohesiveness that is constructed by the socio-environs and the affective attitude of followership who has taken advantages of leader's kindness and affections.

Stephens (2007) claims "appropriate leadership therefore involves the stretching of the elastic of leadership almost as far as it will go". However, this may lead to leadership high-flex further leading a problem of style-drift, which may cause leadership ineffective. Leadership equilibrium provides optimizing the degree of leadership elasticity as and when needed. Therefore, optimum expansion and contraction of leadership elasticity is offered with leadership emotional intelligences and contextual intelligence that makes leaders aware to optimize the stretching of leadership elasticity. This enables leadership balanced behavioural orientation of task and relations through contextual intelligence and contextual experiences, this, further induct leadership equilibrium.

Leadership elasticity has equally valuable contribution with teacher's motivation. Leadership elasticity of switching from task-oriented to relation-oriented behaviour stimulates Clayton's *ERG motivation* (Alderfer 1972) from relatedness need enhancing to growth, while leadership elasticity of switching from relation-oriented to task-oriented behaviour may indeed seek the need for higher relatedness issues. This further reflects the cause and effect relation with teacher's commitment and school good climate.

The contribution of leadership elasticity is necessary for stimulating employee's motivation. Leadership elasticity offers leaders to concisely determine the need of the followers for which school leaders may expand or contract the elastic according to the need. The leadership conciseness is offered by the intelligences and awareness in understanding the immediate variations in the contextual settings. This enables leaders to determine how much elasticity to expand or contract. Expanding and contracting of the elasticity with simultaneous mobility both vertically and horizontally is proficiently feasible. However, as pragmatically, context remaining an uncontrolled aspect, it also offers a great deal of variations. This variation is unequally distributed in school settings, which enables the leaders to adapt the appropriate style either by contraction or expansion of elasticity.

High on relation-oriented behaviour enables conducive school environment. However, articulating high relational behaviour can reflect ineffectiveness toward organizational commitment. High on task-orientation can support organizational commitment, thus, reflects organized management, reinforced motivation toward organizational growth, and attitudinal commitment (Rajbhandari 2013). Nevertheless, appropriate orientation of relations and task behavioural orientation is necessary for effective organization and leadership competences. Therefore, leadership flexibility and mobility for readiness towards leadership elasticity is important to articulate leadership behavioural orientation for followership maintenance. This study explores and discusses the leadership elasticity that enhances to maintain leadership behavioural style-flex in arriving to leadership equilibrium.

## **Analysis and Discussion**

Organizational context plays a dominant role in leadership approach; both leadership readiness and followers' readiness equally contributes in generating leadership elasticity. Context, which is uncontrollable, enables leadership elasticity to gain followers readiness, which is an essential and prominent features for shaping leadership style by articulating relations and task orientations behaviour.

Leadership readiness alone may cause exhaustion therefore; initiating followers' readiness through appropriate expansion and contraction of behavioural orientation generates



leadership elasticity, which offers appropriateness to leadership equilibrium. This is acquired through leadership competences by visualizing and capturing the imagination of masses with consistent to task, time, people and trust. Furthermore, these elements are collated by *timing, teaming, toning, tasking and transforming*, which is the pragmatic elements of *Driving leadership style* (Rajbhandari 2011) to gain leadership competences.

In addition, leadership elasticity towards maintaining the task and relations orientated behaviour is essential to gain control over the environment and towards fostering followership maintenance also by understanding the immediate variables within the contextual settings. Context can have many formations, which is assimilated by social formation, cultural/climate formation and the external forces. Maintenance of these elements generates compatibility of leadership behavioural orientation, thus, generating the leadership elasticity by enabling the required behaviour to fit in the contextual variables.

There is no one best practices of leadership (Peretomode 2012, Bolden et. al. 2003, Fiedler, Fred E. 1967). In educational settings, elasticity of leadership enables leadership flexibility towards adapting the contextual behaviour by orienting either high or low on task and relations. Leadership flexibility enables the educational leaders to perform in doing the right things at right context by articulating the necessary contextual behavioural orientation. This behavioural orientation may or may not be righteous to the followers but may offer at its best to suit the contextual variations. Moreover, to meet the readiness of followers, it is essential to generate leadership elasticity by articulating situational expansion and contraction towards maintenance of the style flexibility and mobility. However, too high or too low flexibility of task and relations orientations may cause to style-drift. Therefore, maintenance of elasticity on leadership behavioural orientation is essential to check the balancing control of the leader's behaviour.

Educational leadership is dynamic (Mostovicz, Kakabadse and Kakabadse 2009), therefore static behavioural orientation causes style-drift of low flexibility- reducing the leadership elasticity. However, stretching towards high expansion causes high style-drift. However, frequent changes of behavioural articulation also causes high flex style-drift, which may not always suit the current context. Therefore, understanding the immediate contextual variables is essential, which enables the educational leadership to produce required amount of elasticity that context demands. Leadership competences enables a leaders to adapt or be flexible in generating the leadership elasticity towards coping with the dynamic environment to maintain leadership appropriate styles-flex in the continuous contextual changes.

Nevertheless, articulation of appropriate leadership behaviour is essential to enlighten their followers towards generating motivation, commitment and bringing about the good climate in the organization. These aspects can be achieved by offering autonomy in decision making by delegating leadership role to the sub-leaders. In doing so, leadership vision to inspire, communicate and building trust amongst and between can be initiated by understanding oneself and the followership domain by enabling *leadership maintenance* through leader's *psychological, sociological and physiological (PSP)* parameters (Rajbhandari and Rajbhandari 2015).

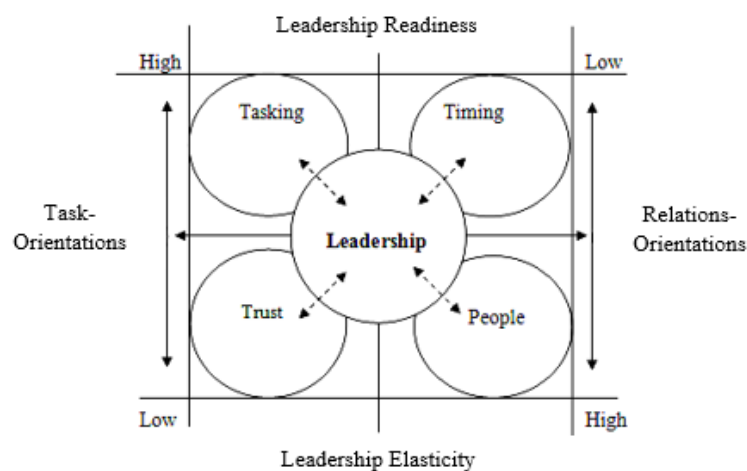
It can, therefore, be comprehended that leadership role is felt necessary to undertake and lead the educational management to success. Furthermore, it is the leadership, who maestro and enroute towards grand leap. This requires leadership elasticity, which emphasises on dynamism and continuous judging of oneself to prevent from style-drift, while articulating style-flexes by incorporating timing, tasking, trusting and people with the context. Leadership role, however, can be different at time during various situation occurs. The grand leap can be achieved through the ability of leader and leadership dexterity by enabling the contextual

intelligence to capture the imagination of the followers or masses and understanding the contextual settings.

There is no one best style for a leadership to adopt (Fiedler, Fred Edward 1967, however, leadership behavioural styles varies according to the contextual setting or the situational circumstances. *Leadership Behavioural theory* by Stogdill in 1945 and Likert in 1947 describes leadership behaviour as *Initiative, Production-Oriented, Structured, Task-centred and Considerate, Peoples-Oriented, People/employee centred* (Bass 2008, Stogdill 1959, Likert 1967). Hersey and Blanchard (1977), Hersey et. al. (2001) illustrates leader's behaviour as *directive behaviour* and *supportive behaviour*. These behaviour later was illustrated as *relations-oriented* and the *task-oriented behaviour* (Rajbhandari et. al. 2016, Northouse 2010) focusing on the willingness and ability of the followers according to their maturity level. Moreover, Rajbhandari (2014) adds the 4<sup>th</sup> dimensions of leadership readiness for flexibility and mobility, which fills in the gap of leader's exertion of willingness and ability towards style-flexes to match the follower's readiness by articulating leadership elasticity.

Leadership elasticity require leadership readiness through articulating leadership behaviour by either demonstrating high or low behavioural pattern aligning with tasking, timing, trusting and people with specific measurement of leadership maintenance. Moreover, the situational leadership readiness style may vary at different contextual settings. This emphasises the leader to articulate leadership behaviour by maintaining task, time, trust and people accordingly as needed to generate leadership elasticity (figure 1).

Figure 1. *Leadership elasticity of leadership readiness*

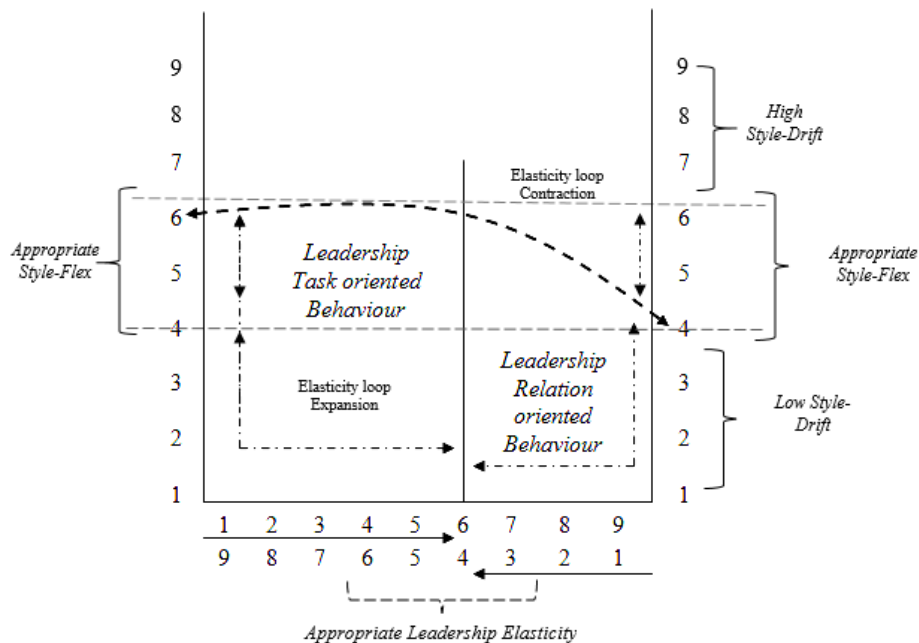


Leadership high on task-oriented behaviour emphasises on leadership autocratic style, which directs the followers to focus with doing the right task, and in right time. However, leadership high on relations-oriented behaviour adapt either democratic or abdicratic (*Laissez faire*) leadership style, emphasising on supportiveness towards followers by building trust and with in-group people (Figure 1). While, articulating high on relations, leaders often delegate the task to the employees, which allows high dependency on followership. On the other hand, articulating high on task-oriented behaviour, while adapting autocratic style reduces the gap of cohesiveness with the followers and generate fewer trust. Therefore, appropriate combined articulation of both leadership readiness on relations and task behavioural orientation is essential. The acceptable combination of articulating the behavioural orientation is achieved through leadership elasticity, where a leader's contextual intelligence and experiences

determines the level of elasticity to meet the equilibrium at different situational context with right timing, tasking, trusting and with the people. This enables the leaders to prevent style-drift by implying multi- flex style to fit in the contextual settings.

Moreover, articulating the combination of relations and task-oriented behaviour raise the question of what would be the ideal degree of leadership elasticity that combines behavioural orientations by incorporating the task, timing, trusting and with the people. According to the findings of Rajbhandari (2013), the result of leadership behavioural pattern suggests that high on task-oriented behaviour had an impact to generate grand leap towards the school success. His results suggest that leadership effectiveness is initiated by task-orientation, while leadership success is drawn by the relational approaches. However, his findings also suggests that both these leadership behaviours are essential for leadership competences. Leadership high on task-oriented behaviour can highly favours growth need of ERG motivation. In addition, attitudinal commitment is also found to be relevantly significant with the leadership high on task-oriented behaviour demonstrating the affective and continuance commitment.

Figure 2. Leadership elasticity degree of expansion and contraction



Appropriate combination of leadership task and relations-oriented behaviour is ideal for organization. In figure 2, appropriate loop combination of leadership behavioural articulation illustrates the flexibility of leadership elasticity to gain appropriate style-flex through leader’s personality to avoid high and low style-drift. Leadership elasticity of expansion of task orientation generates the contraction of relations orientation behaviour in the followership domain. Consequently, articulating the contraction of task orientation enables the expansion of relations orientation towards the followership domain. The expansion and contraction of leadership elasticity has a cause and effect reciprocity effect towards both the followership domain and the contextual environs. Moreover, contraction and expansion of leadership elasticity aligning with task, time, trust and people, needs appropriate balancing of style-flex. Although, leadership elasticity and leadership flexibility is intertwined, it is not the same. However, the commonality in leadership elasticity and leadership flexibility are both drawn from the individual personality. Too high elasticity can cause high style-drift and too low elasticity causes low style-drift (figure 2). However,



maintenance of these style-flexes are essential to prevent style-drift, which is possible with leadership elasticity by appropriately articulating the elasticity expansion and contractions of the behavioural orientation. The articulation of behavioural leadership elasticity of expansion and contraction needs to incorporate the variables of timing, tasking, trusting and people, which align with the followership domain to achieve optimum leadership equilibrium.

The degree of leadership elasticity is determined by the contextual variation in the environmental settings. However, leadership contextual intelligence is an essential elements to judge and measure the contextual variations. This enables the leader's to appropriately initiate the style-flex to achieve leadership equilibrium towards timing, trusting, tasking and people. However, frequent changes of behavioural pattern can cause variations in the leader's personality and the degree of elasticity. This multi attempt changes of behavioural orientation is the major cause of style-drift contributing to low or high-drift.

Moreover, leadership contextual experiences and contextual intelligence is a contributing factor for leadership elasticity. This enables a leader to verify the situations and articulate the behavioural orientation of task and relational. Too high and too low of both the behavioural articulation causes style-drift. This elasticity does not generate leadership equilibrium. Therefore, optimum level of mobility and flexibility of behavioural leadership elasticity is essential to generate leadership equilibrium, which may stretch but not break, which may shape sizes but is reshaped again in its original size. Leadership elasticity enables personality stretches but do not dis-stretches the original character.

## **Conclusion**

Educational leadership is considerably increasing in demand for bringing about improvement in educational settings. Leadership in schools is guided towards driving knowledge, quality and social harmony through leadership appropriateness. Most schools leaders fail to incorporate appropriate leadership style despite demonstrating relational behaviour towards the teachers, students and non-teaching staff. However, articulating leadership task-oriented behaviour is also considered important for organizational effectiveness. This is achieved through leadership elasticity. Leadership elasticity enhances leadership style flexibility and enables educational leaders to maintain appropriate leadership styles. Leadership elasticity is highly essential for maintaining organizational effectiveness also to bring about social harmony within the professional community.

The degree of leadership elasticity is determined by the leadership personality, competences, skills, ability and knowledge to expand and contract leader's behavioural elasticity of both relations and task-oriented, simultaneously to arrive at leadership equilibrium. This study suggests that appropriate combinations of relations and task-oriented behaviour contributes in bringing about organizational effectiveness and social harmony in their own contextual settings being aware of variations in the context, which offers feasible outcomes. Leadership elasticity expanding toward relations-oriented enables less elasticity. However, expansion toward task-oriented behaviour enables high elasticity. It is suggested that high elasticity can be obtained through leadership flexibility, which had a tendencies of switching the behaviour from task-oriented to relations-oriented. However, less elasticity is generated in switching the behaviour from relations to task-oriented behaviour. Leadership elasticity of switching from task to relations-oriented behaviour stimulates motivation, while leadership elasticity of switching from relations-oriented to task-oriented behaviour compel the followers to seek for high consideration towards people from the leader change behavioural orientation.

Therefore, to arrive at equilibrium, simultaneous articulation of relations and task is essential that best suits the leader, followers and the context. Leadership elasticity has a cause

and effect relation in commitment and good climate. Leadership competencies enables leadership flexibility and mobility to generate expansion and contraction towards leadership elasticity to maintain appropriateness of leadership equilibrium style-fix by articulating behavioural style-flexes that is conducive to the context and followership, thus preventing leadership style-drifts. Therefore, leadership is both an art of articulating behaviour by understanding the changing nature of followership and context, as a science, leadership intelligence, emotions, personality, values, moral, perceptions and so forth are moulded and implied to process systematically to arrive at the leadership equilibrium by simultaneously articulating the leadership elasticity of behavioural orientation to best fit the leader, followers and the context.

### **Implications**

The implications of this study suggest that leadership elasticity generate leadership equilibrium by articulating leadership behavioural orientation of task and relations appropriately aligning with the tasking, timing, trusting and people within the contextual settings. Leadership equilibrium generates a degree of leadership appropriateness style-flex to fit oneself within the followership domain and context. The leadership appropriateness of style-flexes is controlled by the leadership elasticity by optimally balancing the elasticity of expansion and contraction of leadership behavioural with conducive alignment to the contextual settings.

Followership domain and context is an ever changing phenomena, this creates dynamism in the contextual settings, enabling leadership dynamics. Unable to identify these parameters can generate distress in leadership process. As there is no one best way to lead, it is important for leaders to be flexible and mobile to generate leadership elasticity. The mobility and flexibility of leadership behavioural orientation enables to identify and address the arising contextual issues through leadership intelligence, emotion, moral, values and so forth. This articulation of psychological parameters enriches leadership to fit in the context by expanding and contracting the leadership elasticity of behavioural orientation.

Moreover, appropriateness of behavioural orientation enhances leaders - allowing a spaces to remain flexible and mobile within the followership domain and the contextual settings. This further enhances the leader to understand and act according to the situational need by articulating the needy behavioural orientation of task and relations. Moreover, while, articulating the leadership behavioural orientation within the contextual settings, leader personality plays a vital role in articulating the followership domain. Nevertheless, leadership behavioural orientation through the style- flexes towards reaching style-fix is essential to prevent the style-drift is essential. This is obtained by leadership elasticity by generating enough and appropriate flexibility and mobility in the behavioural orientation for arriving at the leadership equilibrium. Therefore, arriving at the leadership equilibrium through style-flexes to fit into the followership domain and the context is the art and a science of leadership. The art and science is the sensitiveness and responsiveness of leadership behaviour towards enhancing leadership through systematic process by utilizing the psychological and sociological paradigm in obtaining effectiveness, sociable, emotional, values and so forth in leaders, leadership, followers, followership and contextual settings within and outside.

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