

Going to the dogs: school leadership

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The idea that leadership traits and behaviours can be likened to the same characteristics in dog breeds was developed from reading the research that has shown that people tend to choose dogs that share their physical characteristics, in ways both obvious and subtle. For example, the research undertaken in the United Kingdom found that overweight people were more likely to have plumper dogs, and those who had a planned exercise regime tended to have German Shepherds and similar sporty breeds. What the researchers were able to show was that we are drawn to dog breeds that remind us of ourselves. It was, therefore, a simple imaginative leap in applying this concept to organisation leadership types and behaviours.

Animal behaviour researchers have long known that dogs can sense when their owner is tense, unsettled or is unhappy.

However, according to this recent research published in the journal *PLOS*, that sensitivity means that dogs often take on elements of our personalities, too. The more anxious and neurotic the owner, the researchers discovered, the more likely the dog was to share those same traits. Conversely, more relaxed dogs were more likely to belong to more relaxed owners. Consequently, it was not difficult to explore the hypotheses of this research within a leadership paradigm.

With this research in mind it was then necessary to identify key leadership behavioural types so that canine characteristics could be appropriately matched. The work of Lanyon, and Goodstein, (1998) was most useful in this respect. Their work in fact underpinned the thinking behind the construction of the Drake Predictive Profile (2001) and this was in turn influenced by the work of Goleman (1998) who identified

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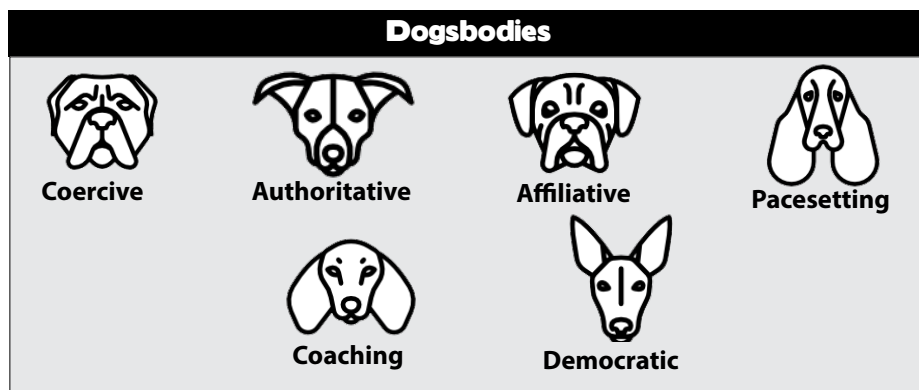
six leadership styles or behaviour groups in respect to the emotional intelligence of leadership. Goleman represented these as:

- Coercive; where the leader demanded compliance. (Do what I tell you.)
- Authoritative; where the leader mobilised people toward a vision. (Come with me.)
- Affiliative; where the leader created harmony and builds emotional bonds. (People come first.)
- Democratic; where the leader forged consensus through participation. (What did you think?)
- Pacesetter or Visionary; where the leader sets high standards for performance. (Do as I do)
- Coaching; where the leader developed people for the future. (Try this.) (Goleman, 1998, pp. 82–83)

Using Goleman’s six leadership styles, the human behaviours can be matched against dogs’ traits and behaviours (see Table 1 over page).

The rise of the mongrels

Clearly there are inherent dangers in anthropomorphising dogs’ behaviours and characteristics, but there is a case for looking beyond the pretty, well-bred dogs with their stylised characteristics to promote the case of the mongrel. School environments constantly change and some schools are incredibly tough, so there is still a place for leadership hybrid vigour and its associated capacity to win



and survive. In Australia, the working Kelpie provides an excellent example of how a selective breeding, which included dingo DNA, resulted in a superior breed of sheep working dog. Also, in this category is the Australian Cattle Dog (Blue and Red Heelers) that were bred to work cattle. In both cases the dogs were not given pedigreed status and it took a long time for them to be recognised as specific breeds.

Conclusions

Selection panels for school leaders’ positions need have an acute awareness of the school climate and operational contexts. The reliance on ancient formulaic descriptions of what some middle-class academics may have decided years ago describe an ideal principal. It does not recognise the countless variations that face newly appointed school leaders when they arrive in the staff car park at 7 am on the first

morning. The Crufts dogs’ show provides a degree of guidance in judging by judging in classes such as gun dog; working and pastoral; terrier and hound; and toy and utility dogs. Therefore, in the last play of this canine metaphor, it would not be unreasonable to develop different criteria and loadings when selecting school leaders against agreed situational classifications and not rely solely on the toy criterion.

References



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Table 1: A dog of a boss

Leadership Behaviour	Description	Breed of Dog	Dog Traits
<p>Coercive</p> 	<p>A coercive leader is one who simply tells others what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. They expect compliance immediately and without question and can be very aggressive when their demands are not met. Consequently, some of the behaviours identified include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders make unreasonable demands of staff. These are often followed up by threats, pressure if do not deliver on them. • Degradation often including some bullying type behaviours, for example constant belittling behaviour. • Restricting daily timetable activities thus making it increasingly difficult to carry out the normal learning and teaching function. • Threatens or intimidation of any staff member who exhibits behaviour not in accord with their requirement, and this may be accompanied by threats or intimidation. • Control through access to resources and support. This type of behaviour may include excessive monitoring of resource usage including time. 	<p>Rottweiler Pit Bull Terrier Chihuahua</p>	<p>Requires extensive socialisation and obedience training; their strong personalities suit an equally strong pack leader.</p> <p>These dogs have a tendency to nip, chew, and bite. Mouthy dogs are more likely to use their mouths to hold or “herd” and need lots of training to learn. They tend to be dogs that were bred to hunt and have an inborn desire to chase and sometimes kill other animals. Anything can trigger that instinct and they need a high, secure fence.</p>
<p>Authoritative</p> 	<p>A leadership style in which the leader dictates policies and procedures, decides what goals are to be achieved, and directs and controls all activities without any meaningful participation by the subordinates. Consequently, some of the behaviours identified include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigid, unthinking adherence to conventional ideas of right and wrong. Important values to an authoritative leader are obedience, success, firm discipline and an honouring of the status quo. • Respect for authority. There is an emphasis on following rules and regulations. Everyone has a proper role to play, including gender role. Slow to trust people. <p>Such a negative view of people leads to the conclusion that harsh discipline and a strong leadership oversight are necessary.</p> <p>Authoritarian personalities believe it is important to be part of a dominant or more powerful leadership fraternity.</p> <p>Thus, they relish being the “best team,” and they expect respect due to status position.</p> <p>Over-simplified thinking. If department leaders and or the government tells us what to do, then we do it and are therefore able to abrogate responsibility for thinking or deciding. ‘We just do what we are told.’</p>	<p>Collie Malamute</p>	<p>Dogs that were bred for jobs that require decision making, intelligence, and concentration, such as herding. If they don’t get the mental stimulation they need, they’ll make their own work -- usually with projects you won’t like, such as digging and chewing.</p> <p>If you’re looking for a watchdog, this is not the breed for you. This dog’s size might scare off an intruder, but that’s about the only protection you’ll get from him. Their independent nature often causes them to be labelled as stubborn or stupid, but their intelligence shines through with the correct training.</p>

<p>Affiliative</p> 	<p>An affiliative leader promotes harmony among his or her followers and helps to solve any conflict. This type of leader will also build teams that make sure that their followers feel connected to each other. Typically, the followers will receive much praise from this style of leader, however poor performance tends to go unchecked. Goleman's affiliative leader is one who cares, first and foremost, about the wellbeing of the employee. There will be very little conflict on a team run by an affiliative leader, staff will feel valued and appreciated, and there will be an overall sense of harmony within the workplace.</p>	<p>Labrador retriever</p>	<p>Are gentle, calm yet exuberant in the field, sweet-natured, fun-loving, devoted and affectionate companions. They are highly trainable and have a willingness to please.</p>
<p>Pacesetter/Visionary</p> 	<p>The defining traits of a visionary leader are that this person will constantly look to the future in every facet of the job, and engage workers by sharing their own optimistic views of where the company is headed. These leaders promote innovation, learning, creativity, and relationships, all in the effort to share and reach a common goal. In short, a visionary helps others see the goal and stay focused on it.</p> <p>When faced with a significant challenge, it's easy for staff to lose sight of the organisation's goals. A visionary leader can help refocus the group and remind everyone of why they are there, what their role in the future of the organisation is, and how great it will feel once they have reached the goal as a team.</p>	<p>Bloodhound Rhodesian Ridgeback</p>	<p>A breed that was bred to range long distances, and given the chance, they'll take off after anything that catches their interest. And many hounds simply must follow their noses, or that bunny that just ran across the path, even if it means leaving you behind.</p>
<p>Coaching</p> 	<p>A coaching leader is one who puts the most time and effort into building up their team members' skills, experience, confidence, and knowledge. They will be the type of leader to say, "give this a try"; and would much prefer to spend time teaching an employee how to answer a question, rather than take a few minutes to answer it themselves.</p> <p>Generally, people enjoy working with a coaching leader as they can inspire fierce loyalty, as well as focussed and satisfied team orientation. Over the long-term, it can result a staff of competent individuals who are capable of multiple roles within the organisation.</p>	<p>Beagle Great Dane</p>	<p>These dog that sound off more often than others. They like to vocalise — with barks or howls — and often. Their trademark howls can be seen as either musical or maddening? Ideal if you're considering a watchdog.</p>
<p>Democratic</p> 	<p>Involves a team guided by a leader where all individuals are involved in the decision-making process to decide what needs to be done and how it should be done. The group's leader has the authority to make the final decision of the group. A democratic leader is one who solves problems or makes changes by asking team members for their feedback, suggestions, and ideas. This leader will be uncomfortable with making all the decisions themselves.</p> <p>When staff are involved in the decision-making process, they may be more inclined to feel obligated to ensure it works. Therefore, many of those who work under a democratic leader may be less likely to disapprove of changes. It can also be a good style for bringing out the best in a team, with the best ideas on the plate in all situations, rather than just the best idea from a single person.</p>	<p>German Shepherd</p>	<p>The German Shepherd may embody some of the best traits of dogs</p> <p>He's an intelligent and capable working dog. His devotion and courage are unmatched. And he's amazingly versatile, excelling at most anything he's trained to do: guide and aid work for the handicapped, police and military service, herding, search and rescue, drug detection, competitive obedience and, finally, faithful companion.</p> <p>He can learn to take new people and circumstances in stride and work with them. This intelligent canine needs a job and consistent leadership to avoid becoming bored or challenging to handle.</p>