A Phenomenology of Leadership in NGOs; A Case Study of Wotr: An Antidote To Drought?

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Abstract

The research is aimed at exploring leadership from a different lens. Phenomenology as a research approach looks in to the lived experience of individuals. In this research we delve into the phenomenon of leadership by looking at individuals and their lived experiences as they play the role of the leader in an organization, in an exploration to arrive at the essence of leadership. For the context of the study only one NGO was chosen and participants were interviewed. FGDs were conducted to verify data, and triangulation was used to identify key incidents and overlaps in experience. The analysis of the collected data through identifying themes, textures and epoch was done to understand the essence of leadership in the organization. The results identify a unique set of elements which constitute the essence of leadership in the organization and helps answer the question what does it mean to be a leader?.

Key words: Leadership, Phenomenology, NGO, Leadership, Case study

1. Introduction

The social sector in India has been growing since it gained steam in the 1980s, many NGOs have mushroomed across the country in various states to work and contribute to the discourse on development. There have been numerous institutions which have seen success in their work. This space has also seen numerous leaders come out of the ranks to lead initiatives which have a huge impact on the discourse.

Leadership in this space is however a complex phenomenon, unlike the corporate where it is easily defined as per hierarchy and order, this space isn't the same. Leadership has no face, it has no position and it has no specific set of traits. Objectifying a leader in this space will be counterproductive, as it would harbor an ethos of individual and self rather than the community and the other. Hence understanding leadership in this space requires an alternate lens. Leadership styles and theories fail to describe the complexity and nature of leadership that plays out in these spaces. The lens used in corporate spaces cannot justify this space. This space isn't built on greed and exploitation of the other, rather it is the opposite. Community and enabling are at the core of the understanding. A for profit business will sacrifice the livelihood of its provider; however this is something the social sector will not do blatantly.

The social sector looks at solutions which have a broad impact and has long term outcomes. As the process of development takes time, however the corporate sector considers efficiency and effectiveness as a construct derived out of time and is fixated on the results. It has absolutely no regard for contexts and narratives and people. Hence taking an approach as far

away as possible from that shallow understanding of the world and surrounding environment is quintessential to the study.

Leadership is a very ambiguous concept, it has no particular definition, it has been a subject of study for generations and yet remains one of the least understood phenomenon(Burns, 1978). The ambiguity of it poses a question on the ways in which it is studied and researched. One cannot simply find an objective truth in the concept of leadership. It isn't a static object, it is to be understood as a flow and hence using phenomenology to understand it makes complete sense.

The use of phenomenology is the highlight of the research as it is a domain which hasn't been used in the field of management research. It has been used in various studies done in the domain of social sciences and ethnography. However it is a new concept in for management research in India. Using phenomenology as a method the attempt of this research is to understand the essence of leadership in the given context. It aims to take the question away from what is a leader, to what it means to be a leader in the given space. Leadership is no more a mere designation or a definition. It is a lived experience with an essence and it is essentially a way of being(Souba, 2014).

Objectives of the study:

This study aims to capture the essence of leadership in a non-governmental organization. The author will engage with the organization WOTR (Watershed Organization Trust), at different levels of its organizational structure. Using the information collected a case study will be prepared in order to give structure to towards understanding the essence of leadership in the organization.

The detailed engagement with particular individuals in the organization once documented can be then be used as reference for future studies, and this information can be used to generate a new perspective towards understanding leadership in similar situations and similar organizations.

One of the objectives of the study is to add to the existing knowledge, a new perspective, a new narrative, and a new element. To try and bring in to the discourse a fresh perspective towards understanding how leadership occurs in a NGO.

The objective of the study is to answer these questions and develop a more in depth understanding of the phenomenon by doing so:

What does it mean to be a leader in WoTR? How have the different problems and challenges been experienced by the leaders? What does it mean to lead a group of people that WoTR works with?

Scope and Limitations:

The scope of the study is limited to two leaders in the organization WoTR; they have been identified to elaborate on their lived experiences as they have been a part of the organization

since a long time. They have also been key elements in the evolutionary process of the organization at each step contributing towards the greater need. The study limits itself to thoroughly investigate the phenomenon of leadership at the organization in order to capture its essence.

In terms of limitations, there have been no concrete studies in the field of phenomenology conducted in management research in India, deriving a contextual idea on how to approach this was a big limitation.

Rigorous course-work which demanded a lot of time was a limitation.

There was a lack of available literature on the topic and approach.

The subjects had busy schedules and finding time with them was a limitation.

The lack of time available to go visit the site of intervention, lack of time given by other participants also works as a limitation. These were the set of constraints that were being dealt with.

Methodology:

The research will be conducted in form of a phenomenological study. The phenomenon will first be defined and the context will be explained. This will be done after a preliminary investigation of the organization, its functions, and area of work, outreach and structure. It will involve learning about the history of the organization and the different events which have shaped its current reality. The organization structure will help identify the different levels that need to be engaged with and help in identifying the different respondents needed for the study.

The researcher will only use qualitative research methods to gather information. The following tools will be used:

In depth interviews: In order to capture individual experiences and feelings, in depth interviews around the subject will be conducted. Open ended questions will be used to probe deeper into the subject. This study engages with the lived experiences of two leaders, coming from different backgrounds that were added to the organization at different points in time.

Focus Group Discussions: This tool will help identify the key overlaps in understanding the subject. Individual experiences will interact and produce new knowledge which would provide a foundation to classify and articulate the phenomenon being studied.

Secondary Sources: Organizational reports, organization publications, journal articles and literature review, speech transcripts.

The researcher will use triangulation to verify information provided as a part of the methodology.

Literature review, theoretical and conceptual framework:

5.1.　On Phenomenology-

The domain of management research in India has seen numerous studies grounded in numbers and quantitative data analysis. Qualitative research has a firm base in and around the realm of management research in India as well, but the number of qualitative studies and specifically the ones done using phenomenology as a methodology are relatively low. "Positivistic research (quantitative research) produces empirical knowledge by the observation of an action, and establishing a cause and effect relationship"(Cilesiz, 2011). On the other hand, the qualitative methodology or "human sciences" approach uses different tools and techniques to study numerous phenomena. One of the key elements of this approach is to focus on the person's action as interpreted by the "subject". The subject being dissociated with any preconceived notion of the action. In terms of understanding it from the perspective of an organization, an excerpt from the book "The SAGE dictionary of qualitative management research:

"To understand an organizational situation, you must study it from the subject's (or employee's) point of view so that you can describe the lived experiences of individuals in a social situation. Phenomenological (or qualitative) [critical realism] researchers argue that positivistic research methods stress objective measurements of phenomena, and therefore they are inherently unqualified to deal with human values"(Thorpe & Holt, 2008).

"Phenomenology is a philosophy, a methodology or an approach to study or research and to understand human experience"(Sloan & Bowe, 2014). It is generally considered a methodology for qualitative research, however, in belief phenomenology emphasizes on people's perception of their world or their insight of how things appear to be(Langdridge, 2007). "As a methodology, one follows a set of tasks that require the researcher to collect data, analyze them and report on findings. The findings – or outcome - of this type of study is a collection of descriptions of meanings for individuals of their lived experiences; experiences of concepts or phenomena"(Creswell & Poth, 2018). This practice was initially developed and rooted in works of German theorist Edmund Husserl. Phenomenology pursues meaning in individual narratives and feelings of particular phenomena to arrive at a profound narrative of the same phenomenon.

"A phenomenon is the object of a conscious subject's experience as it presents itself"(Cilesiz, 2011). "Phenomena are the building blocks of human science and building blocks for all knowledge"(Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological inquiry doesn't aim for empirical generalizations or to develop theories of predict and control; instead it aims at generating more plausible insights to get one in undeviating interaction with the phenomena itself(Manen, 1990). This gives an insight into how this methodology has been studied, implemented, reinvented and reinterpreted multiple times.

As a philosophy, it has different branches and approaches rooted in works of different thinkers and researchers. Some of these variants are transcendental phenomenology, existential phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology etc., to name a few.　This

section will be engaging with few of them to set the context of the researcher's approach. As pointed out earlier Husserl (2012) was the pioneer of the philosophy of phenomenology, his original work and methods were categorized as "transcendental phenomenology", the philosophy is founded on the indivisibility of the "real-ideal dichotomy" and an extensive exploration in to the indispensable structure of the experience uncovered from their essentials(Cilesiz, 2011). For this approach, it is essential to understand that the question is – "How the object presents itself?" – Is more significant than the question – "How the object is?"

Husserl (2012) was followed by prodigious individuals like Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre and Jacques Derrida in constructing other approaches to phenomenology. Heidegger is credited for developing the branch "existential phenomenology" which is a blend of the existential philosophy from the likes of Nietzsche, Sartre & Arendt, and the phenomenological methodology found in works of Maurice Merleau Ponty, and Alfred Schutz.

There exists an intimate relationship shared by the being and the social world (the environment); something existential phenomenology concerns itself with. The individual has no existence outside the said social world, and that world has no existence beyond the awareness of the individual. Take for example, in the organizational world, the organizations and the employees are dependent on each other, requiring each other to maintain the status quo or to change it.

"In organization, it would be inconceivable to think that an individual could exist without interacting with the social world in which he or she works. It is the everyday life of the social world that gives an individual's existence meaning, the organizational world in which a person works would not exist if the organizational members did not find meaning and purpose in their involvement"(Thorpe & Holt, 2008).

The individual is seen as an active subject, rather than an object within the realm of nature: in other words, the existential individual is not purely passive, subject to environmental stimuli, but also a purposeful being that has internal experiences and has the capability to interpret the significance of their "being" and "connections" with others in a social world.

The next realm of phenomenology we will touch upon is hermeneutic phenomenology. This practice emphasizes on "human experience" as it is lived. "The focus of hermeneutic phenomenology is toward illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within experience that may be taken for granted in our lives, with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding"(Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991).

It is often quoted that existential and hermeneutic phenomenology is one in the same approach; however, there is a fundamental difference in terms of how the subject is interpreted. The hermeneutic approach challenges the previous mentioned approaches by questioning the foundation of language and categorizing it as a limitation or as a boundation on the manifestation of the true essence of phenomena. This approach considers it an ontological pursuit in to language and how reality is shaped as a consequence of the means of

communication we use. It particularly looks in to the question, how do we communicate? Rather than looking at answering the question how do we read?

"It is no longer conceived as a methodological or didactic aid for other disciplines, but turns to the conditions of possibility for symbolic communication as such"(Shahbazian, 2015). "Hans Georg Gadamer followed the works of Husserl and Heidegger and was a student and colleague of Heidegger's in the mid-1920s. Working with Heidegger, Gadamer wanted to add to hermeneutic phenomenology and developed interpretive phenomenological thought into a philosophy now called Gadamerian Hermeneutics"(Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

"Husserl's descriptive phenomenology was and is also known as transcendental phenomenology and preceded Heidegger's interpretive phenomenology historically"(Spinelli, 1989). Essentially, we can say that phenomenological approach to research can be categorized into two broad frameworks, descriptive phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology.

The concepts and approaches used by academics of phenomenology differ from those employed by scholars with an unprejudiced view of an organization. Behaviorally and technically leaning modern management theories, which largely dominate the mainstream business schools, objectify individuals in such spaces, considering them as reactive and maneuverable beings conforming to organizational demands. They underestimate the folks' ability for subjectivity, for inner experience, and for consciousness.

"Because of the amazing quality of people's subjectivity, however, people have intentions (consciousness), reinterpret experience, bring newness into being, and discover alternative ways of doing things. People who are part of the organizational world create meaning and alternatives, reflecting upon their experiences in relation to other people and organizational demands, and it is this activity that phenomenology accentuates as both significant and often overlooked"(Thorpe & Holt, 2008).

This inquiry into the basics of Phenomenology lays the foundation to the theoretical framework of this research. For the purpose of this study on leadership the scholar will be engaging with the descriptive approach and will draw on few elements from the likes of Heidegger and his extensive work on interpretive phenomenology. The theoretical foundation is based on understanding reality as manifestation of ideas in the material reality of how they exist. It will draw upon extensively on the notion of "essence" and the various "textures" and "structures" of this "essence". This will be elaborated upon in the next few sections.

5.2.   On leadership-

If one tries searching for available literature on leadership, we will notice that the majority of published works highlight an objective view of how leadership should be or can be categorized into structures and frameworks which are universally applicable. It is something which is prevalent in the field of management research in India as well. Leadership is understood as well as taught with this evident construct that leadership is something that can be attained if one is indoctrinated with this 'taught' information. Leadership theory as it is

called presents an objective lens to look at what this study defines as the phenomena of "leadership". This section engages with various components of what classifies as leadership theory and touches upon it as a process of "bracketing" or categorizing existing knowledge and perspectives in order to get closer to the "essence" of leadership in the given context.

"Leadership as a field has advanced quite slowly, prevailing in a disordered state for decades. Rushing from one fad to another, most leadership theories contain conceptual weakness and a lack of empirical support"(Yukl, 2010). Indeed, "leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth"(Burns, 1978).

The engagement with leadership theory gives us an insight into how leadership is understood in different contexts and situations, it helps us identify several works done to identify and categorize various leadership styles. It also touches upon how ethics plays a vital role in uncovering the phenomenon of leadership. This attempt will throw light on interactions between power, ethics, authority, position, gender and leadership. To begin we first look in to how leadership is understood and defined across various studies and research which has been conducted in India and around the world.

"Leadership is defined in so many different ways that it is hard to come up with a single working definition. What leadership is? Everyone has their own intuitive understanding of it, based on a mixture of experience and learning, which is difficult to capture in a succinct definition" (Ali, 2012).

"Scholars should understand that leadership is not a moral concept. Leaders are like the rest of us; trustworthy and deceitful, cowardly and brave, greedy and generous. To assume that all leaders are good people is to be willfully blind to the reality of the human condition, and it severely limits our scope for becoming more effective at leadership"(Kellerman, 2004).

Even though it is categorically impossible to define Leadership, there have been numerous definitions which are given in the academic space. James MacGregor Burns in his book "leadership", 1978, talks about how the concept of leadership can be defined in 130 formal ways, to which new definitions have been added in recent times. According to Burns, the following elements are common across all definitions, he says "leadership is causative and it is collective. Transforming leadership is elevating, leadership is morally purposeful and lastly leadership is dissention"(Burns, 1978). This was the first time "Transforming leadership", which eventually became transformational leadership, was used and opened up a whole new domain of leadership theory. He identified two "political leadership: transforming and transactional". Transactional leadership is a process when an individual reaches out to others for the purpose of exchange, in his words "leaders approach followers with an eye towards exchanging"(Burns, 1978)(Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Transforming leadership on the other hand goes beyond followers complying; it incorporates changes fundamental to the need, beliefs and value systems of the followers. "The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents"(Burns, 1978).

Researcher, Bernard M. Bass (1989), expanded on the works of Burns by elucidating on various "psychological mechanisms" that form the basis of "transforming" and "transactional leadership"; Bass introduced the use of "transformational" instead of "transforming." He added to the original work of burns, bringing in the elements of measurability and its impact on followers in terms of motivation and performance. One of the major differences in both their approaches was that Bass recommended that "leadership can display both transactional and transformational leadership, concurrently".

Leadership is a domain which has been studied before the likes of Burns and Bass. However their contribution has been very essential in developing leadership theory, one can look at other works as well to get an insight into how leadership has been studied across the field. Take for example - Peter Senge (2000) one of the most well-known authors in the field, he defines it as an action, he says "Leadership is a capacity in the human community to shape its future". His work mainly focuses on introducing leadership in light of an organization with effective learning practices. He points out this term "learning organization" and within that context elaborates on leadership. For him leadership in a learning organization was different from that in traditional organizations.

"Executives can convert their company into a learning organization, which is a company whose employees are continually learning new things that help the company to adapt and innovate in order to do well in a rapidly changing marketplace. Leadership in a learning organization looks different than in a traditional hierarchical company".

This insight into leadership is essential for the study as it helps bracket this particular construct or prior information about leadership, the approach used by Senge involves a defined system and within it particular process are required to create a learning organization and within that construct he defines leadership and says that leaders are present at different levels of the organization and have different experiences and contexts.

However all these works only look into the question what is a leader? Or who is a leader? This investigation gives us an objective view of leadership. We will now move into the different styles of leadership developed in the academic space.

Research on leadership has occurred from two main perspectives and has followed three major theoretical tracks(Morford, 1987). "Studies from the viewpoint of leadership itself as well as from the perspective of organizational effectiveness have contributed greatly to the existing understanding of leadership. Writers like William Ouchi (1981) or Stephen Robbins (1974) may take an organizational viewpoint while people like Warren Bennis (1985) or James MacGregor Burns (1978) approach the same issues by studying leadership, but they arrive at similar conclusions, reinforcing both perspectives"(Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Other specialists like Peter Drucker (1967), Gary Yukl (1981), Fred Fiedler (1977), and Bernard Bass (1981) combine these perspectives in their work. Within these perspectives, "three major theories of leadership research and writing have interacted since the turn of the century: trait theory, behavior theory, and situational or contingency theory"(Morford, 1987).

"The Ohio state studies concluded four behavioral styles of leadership: (a) low structure low consideration, (b) low structure high consideration, (c) high structure low consideration, (d) high structure high consideration, where structure means task or goal orientation and consideration means relationship orientation"(House, 1977). (House, 1977) devised the path goal theory based on expectancy model of motivation. "The four types of leadership styles advocated by House are (a) directive leadership, (b) participative leadership, (c) supportive leadership, (d) achievement oriented leadership"(House, 1977).

In the Indian context, authors like Ganguli, Sharad Kumar, and Balaraman talk about how leadership in India was identifiable with an authoritarian like style based on centralized systems(Ghosh & Shejwal, 2006). These studies were conducted in the early 90s and even before that in some cases, however studies done in later years concluded that leaders who were more stakeholder oriented and transformative were preferred. The standout framework coming from the Indian context is the concept of "task nurturant leadership". "Nurturant leaders met their expectations by caring, directing, guiding and safe-guarding the interests of their subordinates"(Sinha, 1979). This model has been compared to many western models of leadership as well(Ghosh & Shejwal, 2006).

This comprehensive exploration of a wide variety of literature only points out that leadership research can objectively answer the question what is a leader? Not many works comment or explore the ambiguous nature of leadership. This research is an attempt to do that by exploring the possibility of what it means to be a leader. "Leaders serve as symbols for representing personal causation of social events. How and why are such attributions of personal effects made? Instead of focusing on leadership and its effects, how do people make inferences about and react to phenomena labelled as leadership?"(Pfeffer, 1977). This excerpt captures the question which this study is trying to find an answer. The same study further goes on to point out how leadership is just another construct similar to social influence. "Apparently there are few meaningful distinctions between leadership and other concepts of social influence. Thus, an understanding of the phenomena subsumed under the rubric of leadership may not require the construct of leadership"(Pfeffer, 1977). Pfeffer tries and establish the fact that leadership as construct has no influence on the outcomes of the organization. Hence it is safe to say that the construct of leadership is an outcome of the context, which means that as the situation or the context changes, what it means to be a leader changes. In other words, the reality of the subject (leader) plays an important role in coming closer to knowing what it means to be a leader. This engagement with available literature on leadership helps us delve into the next section that will engage with the idea of phenomenology of leadership and how we can approach this and what framework the study will use further to engage with the current topic?

5.3.   On phenomenology and leadership

This section will look into phenomenology as a method to study leadership. The previous section elaborates on the ambiguous nature of leadership and the various ways it can be understood. This section will delve into describing the elements of "essence", "experience", "textures", "subject", "reality" and finally the phenomena itself. The study attempts to follow

the methodology of descriptive phenomenology as was mentioned earlier. "Descriptive phenomenology is more useful for inquiry that aims to discover universal aspects of a phenomenon that were never conceptualized or incompletely conceptualized in prior research"(Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

Phenomenology is the study of phenomena and the way they are experienced in the first person.

The key focus of researchers in this field is to address the question, "what is the nature and essence of the experience of the phenomenon for those who experience it? They are less concerned with the facts of a leadership situation (what actually happened and when, who did what to whom, etc.) and more interested in the first-person as-lived meaning and significance of the experiences of those involved. They maintain that the only way that things (people, incidents, debates) can be known is through the way in which they experience them"(Douglas & Wykowski, 2010).

As suggested by burns leadership is a phenomenon which has been studied extensively, however hasn't been understood much though. This study is an attempt at understanding the essence of this experience. To reach a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon we keep the concept of "experience" at the core. Kockelmans in 1994 distinguishes two concepts of experience, based on the German language and its usage, namely "Erlebnis" and "Erfahrung". Both happen to have different meanings, the former corresponding to the everyday use of the word 'experience' which refers to the everyday actions one participates in. The latter refers to "the full-fledged experience or act of consciousness in which something real is given to consciousness as what it genuinely is"(Kockelmans, 1994). The current engagement will use the latter concept to engage with the idea of leadership in an NGO.

The further engagement with similar literature identifies how reality is a combination of two basic components, the ideal component and the material component. In isolation ideas and "things" or materials are separate, however, they interact and meaning derives from their action. The material component is always present in any experience and hence to understand the essence of an idea it is essential to interact with the material component of the idea(Cilesiz, 2011).

Every experience has two dimensions, Noesis and Noema(Moustakas, 1994; Husserl, 1969). They combine to form the consciousness of the experience. The relationship between the two is termed as intentionality(Cilesiz, 2011).

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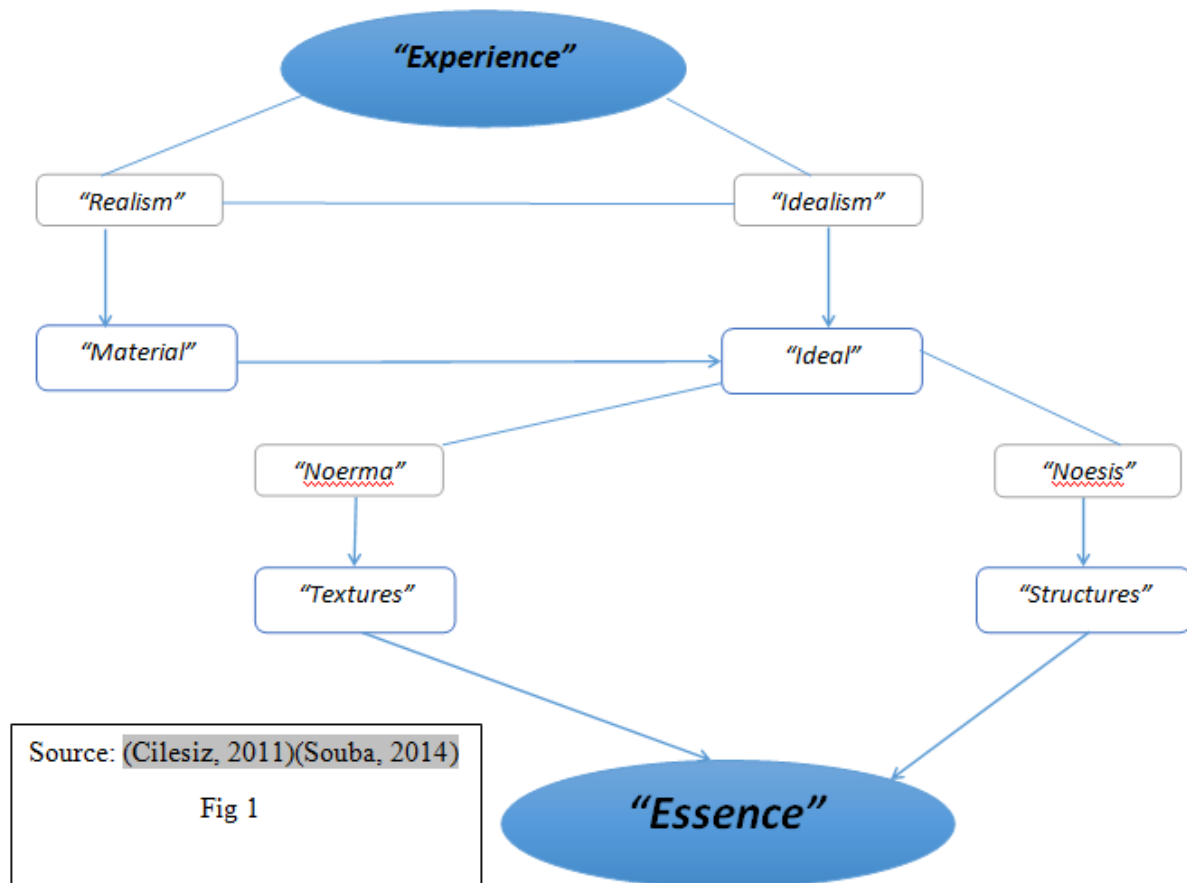
Source: (Cilesiz, 2011)(Souba, 2014)

Fig 1

As per phenomenology, "all experience is intentional experience, consciousness is the consciousness of an object, and the consciousness of an object requires a subject"(Moustakas, 1994). Moving ahead the phenomenological perspective identifies that each experience is composed of what is called a texture and structures. Textures vary outside of the appearance and structures account for or help identify the underlying textures. "The 'essence' of the experience of a phenomenon can be investigated by observing its multiple manifestations, and can be investigated through the structures underlying the textures of that essence, with focus on the commonalities of the various experiences"(Moustakas, 1994)(Cilesiz, 2011)(Husserl, 1969)

Next we engage with concept of reality and how it is constituted when we look at it from the lens of phenomenology. Literature suggests that "we each have our own perspective of reality that we can only interpret through our senses and unique experiences. Phenomenology as a method of inquiry is valuable because we can never know something objectively, as it actually is. To do that, we would have to become that something. The observing is not the observed. I can describe you, categorize you, and compare you, but my observations and characterizations are not you. In other words, I see you, and you see me. I experience you, and you experience me. I see your behavior. You see my behavior. But I do not and never have and never will see your experience of me, just as you cannot 'see' my experience of you. My experience of you is not 'inside' me. It is simply you, as I experience you. And I do not experience you as inside me"(Souba, 2014).

This poses the question what does it mean to be something, in the case of this study it particularly helps understand why we ask the question what it means to be a leader? Rather than what is a leader?

"Phenomenology gives direct access to the way in which leader and leadership occur for individuals in dealing with challenges they face, often by shuddering us loose from the engrained, hidden frames of reference that we are so attached to and yet so unaware of"(Souba, 2014). In comparison to various qualitative methodologies, importance is given to the subjectivity and individuals are encouraged to ruminate on the 'essence' of their individual experiences when we look at phenomenology as a methodology. Hence, the defined reality and its essence can be captured through the study of a being living the reality and "experiencing" it(Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

"In examining how a specific leadership encounter occurs for people, contextual dissimilarities can be unpacked and hidden obstacles that limit our leadership efficiency can be discovered"(Souba, 2014). "A phenomenology of leadership hence becomes an apt approach to studying leadership as we experience reality not in theory but in lived experiences. Possible meanings are unpacked by challenging existing taken-for-granted frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions, the aim is to discover the underlying and precipitating factors accounting the experiences"(Moustakas, 1994)(Souba, 2014).

Only when leadership becomes or is a lived experience does it grant access to its essence(Souba, 2014).

This study will try and engage with the fundamental structures of leadership in the given context, by understanding the fundamental structures of "being" that makes it possible to be a leader. This comes from the philosophical thoughts of Heidegger from his book being and time, and his concept of "Dasien". The lived experiences of individuals here become pivotal in understanding what it means to be a "being" living as a leader.

Basically leadership if understood as a phenomenon needs to be understood as a lived experience of a subject, in a particular context. Leadership cannot be approached like a linier equation or a formula. The manifestation of the context (knowledge) as a lived experience of the subject will essentially bring out the experience of "being" a leader. "Phenomenologists thrive to uncover the inherent structures that constitute and shape human experiences. The aim is to discover the underlying precipitating factors"(Moran, 2000). The inherent structures are rooted in how existing knowledge interacts with the reality of the subject. The essence of the experience (in this case leadership) lies in understanding the process of how reality interacts with the ideal (knowledge) and manifests itself in the lived experience of the subject. It is a process of uncovering, a documentation of how "objects" reveal themselves.

The following figure is a diagrammatic representation of the same.
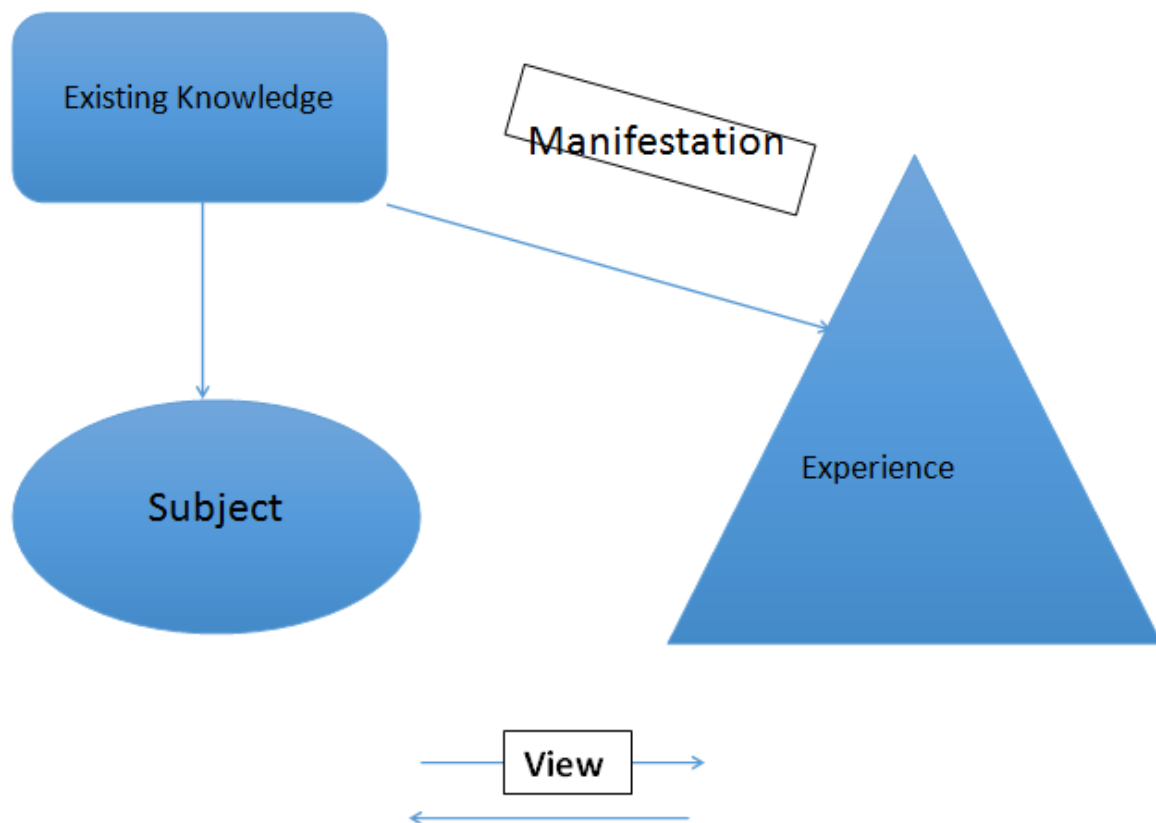
Source: (Moustakas, 1994), Fig 2

To conclude this section, this study uses this theoretical framework to dig deeper into the lived experiences of two leaders from the organization WoTR, by doing so it aims to uncover how leadership is understood, or what the essence of leadership is, in the organization. This attempt provides a unified framework to aid understanding and studies involving the exploration of the essence of leadership in various contexts and scenarios. It is reiterated many times that every experience is a manifestation of its essence, the experience of leadership is a manifestation of its essence.

The case of WoTR (Watershed organization Trust): The Antidote to Drought?

India is a vast land with various topographical, geographical and meteorological variations that one can observe as we move from region to region. Majority of these vast lands are classified as rural and belong to the rural population of the country. Farming is considered the main source of livelihood for them and rain is their only source of irrigation in majority of these regions. Rain fed agriculture comes with the risk of crop failure and low productivity as a consequence of dependency of on rains. Indian climate being semi-tropical and arid, rainfall, theoretically happens for a span of 4 months, it is called the monsoon season. However, in certain regions rainfall is roughly 15days in a season. This is because of the nature of flow of the rains.

The region of central India is one such area where rainfall is scarce. The communities residing in these areas are vulnerable to crop failure and low yield because of their practice of rain-fed agriculture. This puts at risk a major chunk of population residing in these areas. They are bordering being destitute and poverty stricken. One such example is taken from a news article:

"The villagers were forced to walk over 200 meters every day for a few pots of water. Agricultural production, even in a year of reasonably good rain, was sufficient only for three to four months. Labour opportunities were scarce and villagers had to migrate to resource-endowed areas to work seasonally at cutting sugarcane or for contractors of brick kilns. Even children were forced to tend to cattle and augment family income".

Access to potable water is every human being's birth right and knowing and seeing people living in conditions where they're being deprived of this basic right was one of the key elements of the problem identified by the founding members of the organization. WoTR came to existence with the need to help vulnerable populations cope with this pressing need. The organization was setup by Fr. Hermann Bacher, as a facilitating and implementation agency for the Indo German Development Watershed Programme (IGWDP), IGWDP was operationalized in December 1992 under the bilateral aid agreement between the German and Indian Governments, was visualized and initiated in 1989 by Fr. Hermann Bacher of Social Centre, in Ahmednagar, the guiding spirit behind the programme. Social center was set up in 1968 by Fr Bacher to aid the vulnerable populations in the Ahmednagar region of Maharashtra. He worked there for over 60 years before returning to his home in Switzerland.

In 1976 Fr. Bacher met a young motivated individual by the name of Crispino Lobo (one of the key leaders and subjects of the study), the young excited Lobo approached him and said "I really like the work you're doing, I want to join you in the work you're doing". He said "you are welcome to join, but first finish your studies". At that time Lobo was pursuing his studies in Delhi. Fr Bacher in the consequent years was in Delhi working as the head of Misereor, approached Lobo when he was finishing his later part of the program he was enrolled in. Fr Bacher asked him to lead the effort he had conceptualized known as IGWDP, at first Lobo felt he wasn't competent enough to play the role, and he says:

"Watershed development is different as a geographical concept and as a developmental concept. What you're asking is very high level stuff involving various high-stakes stakeholders. Like different governments etc. and I said I don't think I have the capacity. I pointed out people who were more senior and would fit the job well"(Lobo, Interview, 2019).

It was Fr Bacher who insisted that he wanted him to lead the initiative. He offered a pool of books and readings and asked Lobo to go through it. In this span, they both discussed and interacted with each other on this topic and finally Crispino agreed to come on board. Crispino recollects the conversation:

"After discussing and learning more about the initiative I said to him, I'm ready to take it but what's the bottom line? There is a context to this which he understood. I was preparing myself to work with him in the development field since 1976, when I asked him what are the

stakes, how will it affect my future? Will it advance it or will it jeopardize it? To which he said, if you succeed you would have made it, but if you fail you will have to leave the sector. That's the bottom line and now you choose. At that moment I laughed and I said I'll take it"(Lobo, Interview, 2019).

Crispino here showed that he didn't hesitate when it came to taking risks and this was one of the primary reasons Fr. Bacher approached him, he says "Fr Bacher said he wanted me precisely for this reason, to take risks was something normal for me. He further went on to mention that it was the ability to look at a problem and see a way out or not to be intimidated by it, is exactly the leadership quality you need for this kind of a task".

This was how they came together and established the IGWDP in its initial stages. The experience of Fr. Bacher during the droughts of 1972 and 1987 helped formulate the initiative, after the 1972 drought the government came up with huge amounts of work for soil and water conservation, this was done as a part of wage for work scheme. As Crispino points out:

"In 1970 Maharashtra had a serious drought, people died. But after that the Government of Maharashtra Launch what was called the Employment Guarantee Act. The law said that if anybody or a certain group of people wanted to work, the government, it had plans to provide them with work. Provide wages for work they were obliged to. As a part of that the government launched a huge amount of work for soil and water conservation. They built tens and thousands of water banks, Check dams percolation tanks. So many of these check dams that you see have originated during that time. In 1976 this program was launched and by 1987 you could see all the structures around Maharashtra. Because drought is a recurring feature in Maharashtra they were all these people demanding work and the government had to provide it. So they were people building roads, building dams et cetera"(Lobo, Interview, 2019).

As a result of this work, the drought that hit the region in 1987 did not have that severe an impact on the people. There was evidence of improved status of the communities; this laid the foundations to the integrated approach towards watershed development in the region and consequently the organization WoTR.

"Unlike the impact in 1972 when there was mass migration and starvation, in 1987 this wasn't the case. It was clearly seen that wherever soil and water conservation work was done the impact of drought was cushioned. Because the water was conserved in the soil the groundwater table had recharged. The people had water it was not as if they had full water like it has rained throughout the year but It was not as if they were starved"(Lobo, Interview, 2019). As Crispino points out.

Watershed development became a major part of the development narrative. It provided an entry point to enabling the people to safeguard against irregular and erratic rainfall.

"The concept of watershed development started growing in Maharashtra as an antidote to draught, as a means of actually spreading rural development and reducing the impact of

erratic rainfall. So it began to grow as a part of the developmental narrative and the government had already started work in water watershed development"(Lobo, Interview, 2020).

These were the fundamental reasons behind the implementation of the IGWDP; however, the bilateral project meant that funding could happen only from government to government. Using the bureaucratic machinery to access those funds meant losing out on valuable time and resources. To make sure the funding did not come across any legal hurdle, NABARD was brought to help disperse the funds. WoTR was born out of this need to implement and utilize these funds for capacity building, empowerment and overall development of the people. Their annual report points out

"WOTR's primary focus, since its inception in 1993, has been capacity building of and support to NGOs and CBOs in Watershed Management. The objective is to mobilize the self-help capacities of individuals and communities to regenerate the eco-spaces or watersheds they live in, harvest rainwater wherever it falls, use it productively and undertake sustainable livelihoods which take them out of poverty".

This was the story of how and why WoTR was setup. Crispino Lobo and Fr. Bacher finally registered the organization in the year 1993 after it was operational for a few years; they felt the need to do so and went ahead with the registration. WoTR in its initial phase faced a problem, of mobilizing people and scaling up their projects. It was a very new concept (watershed development); it was something that required technical know-how and a lot of experts to implement.

"This whole issue of watershed development was pretty much a black box, people didn't know what we (WoTR) were talking about, and because it was another technical concept 30 years ago. Today it's pretty common, and the big challenge was how to sell an idea as complicated as water shed development. How do you begin to simplify and demystify so people begin to see the connection between what you're proposing and the challenges and difficulties they are facing as a possible solution. What we are proposing is a possible solution to the difficulties they are facing and want to solve. That was the topic of our intervention and that what we wanted to do".

The process of scaling up the programme was a successor to "demystifying, simplifying and introducing the concept of watershed in a small scale, which is in a village". Using this intervention as an example they set out to incorporate more villages in the region. Crispino puts it like "the next thing is to demystify the technical portion, that means, at the crux make it simple, so that people can adapt it and implement it and then develop a pedagogy of action with clearly defined steps linked with outcomes linked to inputs linked to reward incentive system, which would have a timeline supported by appropriate capacity building modules, and a monitoring evaluation system. We had to evolve this whole strategy of what we called a vision, our operational plan. And both taken together the critical thing was not to do each module or each section correctly but that it is correct it is correct in terms of it interlinkages and relationship with everyone's aspect of the programme"(Lobo, Interview, 2019).

Using this approach the organization started to spread across the region showing results and using the learning by doing methodology. NABARD in its reports mentions: "One of WOTR's major contributions has been the pioneering of an effective strategy for rapid, large-scale capacity building called the Participatory Operational Pedagogy (POP). Two innovative components of this pedagogy, which facilitated intensive participation and high quality of work, were the Net Planning Method for project preparation and the "Learning-By-Doing" system of training and accompaniment for project implementation. This approach has been cited in the Common Approach for Watershed Development, Guidelines of Govt. of India for govt. funded watershed projects in India".

In the process of establishing themselves they were asked to incorporate participation of women into the decision making process of the programme, when they tried they failed miserably, it was with the introduction of a young lady Marcella D'Souza, Marcella is an alumnus of the Government Medical College, Nagpur and a Takemi Fellow of the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH). She has spent more than 3 decades in rural development, six years of which were spent on the Andes Mountains in Peru, South America where she established and managed an extensive community-based rural health program. Marcella joined WOTR in 1995 as the Programme Coordinator for women's promotion in the Indo-German Watershed Development Programme (IGWDP). In this programme, she developed the pedagogy to integrate health, gender and women's empowerment in watershed. She eventually went on to spearhead the climate change adaptation initiatives taken up by the organization along with Lobo.

Marcella recollects her account of her work and how and why she started:

"At that time I was returning from Peru, I'm a medical doctor and I was working on the Andes Mountains on community health and rural development. I was returning to India. They thought that I was the right person to look into at the aspect of women's promotion. So, that's how I got integrated into it in late 1995. When I went around and saw, the biggest challenge was to get the women to participate. Because they saw a woman in the team, whenever I went to the villages with my male teammates, women started participating. They felt that because there is a woman there they could come. The presence of a woman made it easy for them to come forward"(D'Souza, Interview, 2019).

After the introduction of Marcella they expanded and diversified into various areas like soil health, agriculture, gender, health and sanitation. They stuck to their fundamental philosophy of building capacity in order to enable self-sustenance. The ongoing work was successful only up to a point in time. The organization identified that the measures being taken were not yielding the desired results. They tried and investigate into what the reason was but couldn't identify. Marcella mentions their experience of how the diversification took place the conflicts they faced internally and how the critical problem of climate change was finally identified:

"We realized that good watershed development was done, agricultural productivity was increasing but what next? So that gave us the opportunity to say what next, we had to go into

what we call livelihood development. Because watershed is needed everywhere , and then the question came fine watershed is needed everywhere, yes we have a role over there, even if we give our roles many more people are required because the need is great. Then came up the need was do we need to look at managing water, do we need to help people how do you take agriculture. What we did earlier was, we linked the people with the agriculture university or the KVKs, but what we found was, they were linked, they were approached by the people, but there was nothing cohesive or something was not going right. Something was not going right we couldn't point a finger to anyone. So we said okay continuing our touch in the village, its valuable to see how the villages manage to sustain and manage their resources of land and water. We continued with watersheds but we also felt we had to bring the watersheds treated to more sustainable management. The management of the watershed post development was the need. At the same time in the year 2003, there were almost four consecutive years of drought like conditions , and in the villages where we worked we found, normally people should have work in the villages because of improved agriculture. What we found was that people were migrating in distress. We saw people migrating in distress, we saw the weather patterns very unusual and then we said something is happening. There is a problem we don't understand, right at that time came out the issue of, it was somewhere about 2005-06 we started saying that something is happening with the weather and we don't understand it. Today we're saying climate change adaptation, at that time we were saying we need to look at, how we look at the weather in these conditions to make it more sustainable"(D'Souza, Interview, 2019). This was what we know today as climate change and initiatives to help with climate change adaptation.

Currently, from its inception water has supported close to 3000 villages and has had a positiveimpact on the lives of over 2.8million people. WOTR has worked directly with over 900 villages directly impacting 1.1million people and it has also been involved with other agencies working in 2100 villages indirectly impacting 1.7 million people. The organization's watershed programme covers close to 250,000 ha of land across 400 villages. It has helped facilitate MNREGA in 200 villages covering an area of 170,000 ha of land. The organization has trained over 300,000 individuals coming from 69 countries and 27 different states of India. This has been conducted through onsite training programmes and virtual ones as well. The organization has been involved with gender related interventions as well. WOTR has been directly involved in creating over 4000 SHGs affecting 200,000 women. This also will help build the base to the next section which specifically talks about women's participation and its various aspects.

Analysis:

7.1.   The "essence" of leadership at WoTR:

For the purpose of the study two leaders were taken as subjects and they were interviewed for their insights on what it means to be a leader at WoTR. Secondary literature published by them, various speeches by them at different forums were also analyzed to arrive at the answer to the question, a funnel approach towards understanding the phenomenon was utilized, the broad epoch was laid out, in this case the challenges that were being faced by the

organization and its leaders. The second layer is the layer of action, which delves into the ethics and ways of acting, coming to the final layer the philosophical foundations of the experience.

What does it mean to be a leader in WoTR? How have the different problems and challenges been experienced by the leaders? What does it mean to lead a group of people that WoTR works with?

In the research conducted certain themes were identified and layers or textures which played out in the lived experience of the participants, these will be highlighted and discussed in this section. It will be an attempt at identifying the key elements of Crispino Lobo (one of the founding members of the organization) andMarcella D'Souza's (who came in to the organization for a particular purpose but became a vital part of the organization consequently) experiences being a part of WoTR. The previous section lays down the context of both their experiences and touches upon the kind of work WoTR is involved in. This section can be understood in parallel with the previous section.

After analysis of the interview transcripts and secondary documents the study identified few themes that were prevalent in both the subjects' individual experiences. These themes are representative of the essence of their experience being a leader in the organisation. The study approaches the experience of the individuals with flavours or textures to understand the subjectivity of the experiences. Using this framework the study aims to capture, what it means to be a leader in WoTR?

7.1.1. Challenges: We don't look at them as a problem. We look at them as an opportunity

The lived experiences are hinged on few critical events which both participants talk about extensively, these events can be highlighted as challenges they came across. These challenges have been elaborated on in the previous section to set the context of the analysis. One thing common to both their experience was the way looked at challenges, not as problems but opportunities. Marcella mentions "We don't look at it as a problem. We see it as an opportunity, as a space to be filled, how do we respond to it better?"

This is specifically used when she refers to identifying gaps when they began work with different communities. This is a recurring phrase used by her to describe every challenge she faced as part of the organisation. The reification of this phrase or thought comes out in one of her narrative of the decision of becoming financially self-sustained as an organisation:

"We found that we still had to depend on projects for our own survival. But, we had to do it, now what happened, because the challenge came up NABARD decided that the programme coordinator role was not required, our role in the programme became limited only to capacity building. A little later NABARD said 'you know why WoTR should be the only capacity building agency, let's take other people'. So they took in other agencies to do capacity building for the indo German programme. So, that was another problem, our role as capacity

building agency became limited but what we said was it was our opportunity to look at something else"(D'Souza, Interview, 2019).

Crispino mentions the same phrase when he elaborated on the challenge of capacity building and operationalising the IGWDP. In his description of how dealing with change and the changing world around is a challenge he says:

"We don't see it as a problem but you also say it is a problem with an opportunity to be taken advantage of. I would tell you and we would often say this in the organisation that, somewhere in Africa an antelope gets up in the morning and tells itself if I don't run as fast as I can I will be dead meat by evening. And the lion also gets up and says, if don't get up and run as fast as the antelope I'll die hungry. This dialectic is what I believe is what drives WOTR. Maybe we owe it to ourselves whatever the world throws at us is not what we determine, but what we make of it and grow better. That will determine our well-being in the future. The only constant is change, either we reinvent ourselves or move aside and be left behind, that's it"(Lobo, Interview, 2019).

Leadership at WoTR looks at challenges as opportunities, they make sure to fill gaps and work towards the next intervention needed to fulfil the vision of the organisation. The experience of facing challenges adds to the essence of what it means to be a leader at WoTR.

7.1.2. Ethics, Implementation and Stakeholders:

This section will talk about three sub themes grouped to together to better capture the essence of the phenomena. Implementation of the organisation's imagination, its vision and mission are kept at the core of ethical action in this context. Being involved in development work there are multiple stakeholders involved, this poses numerous ethical dilemmas and situations which questions the implementation process itself.

The leaders stayed true to the organisation's objective, they develop and design new approaches to implementation which are inclusive, participatory and essentially democratize the process of development.

"We had to evolve this whole strategy of what we called a vision, and our operational plan. Both taken together the critical thing was, not to do each module or each section correctly, but that it is correct in terms of it interlinkages and relationship with everyone's aspect of the programme. Any dysfunctionality at any part of the chain, or links or moving parts, would not yield the desired impact. So we had to push through financial incentives, technical capacity building inputs with on field guidance and at the same time with policy and administrative support from government at the local level. So we had to weave all the various strands together and we had to do it by learning and trial and error and we learnt as we went along and we changed. So the key principle behind, the key principle on which organisation hinged on was, we wanted to make it on the front end that identifies with the people, simple enough to say oh yeah, had you asked us we would have told you, we know it. It had to evoke that kind of response after you have intervened. So that means, simplify it to that point that they know it and they understand it and are not overwhelmed by the complexity. At that end

under no circumstances compromise what is required technically to be minimally required, do not compromise. So the argument was we will not compromise on standards as it impacts the integrity of the work as well as the sustainability of the work. But, since we don't compromise on standards there are obligations to provide people with the means to raise people, their capacity and their ability and skills to that level of standard. So our obligation was, we bring your skills to that level and not lower the standards. So this was the operational consideration number 1, what works well at the lower level, at the lowest level would automatically scale up if others of a similar nature are involved in it, work in it, participate in it, share it and put it back to where they come from. And the third element was we meant to administer the critical resources on time. These were some of the key challenges some of the principles on which we, the premise on which we drafted our response and this is the pathways that we took"(Lobo, Interview, 2019).

 This was seen while facing other challenges as well, as Marcella describes:

"We had discussions with them and they told us, it was based on WoTR's experience as a facilitating NGO to train other NGOs in the district that they used our whole method of having the concept of a mother NGO for each district. So they had different mother NGOs in different districts who were accompanying the practioners in the field for the DPAP programme. For us this was also another good thing as it was helping us scale. We were the mother NGO I think for one or two districts but we had trained many other NGOs because of their experience of working in the indo German programme. We were creating the base for many more people to be able to do it, I know we were creating out own competitors, but we very consciously decided we needed to go there".

"Yes, because what happens is the problem is so great that we can't afford to be selfish. But what we realise as well when we create our own competitor, we have to look at something else for ourselves That's what we looked at, we look and see what's the next opportunity. So it looks at you know what is the other gap that is not being filled that we can step into. So we allow our competitors to take it forward and we look at the next gap. Keeping a little ahead of the time, that's how we have to keep ourselves relevant"(D'Souza, Interview, 2019).

The subject identifies how the implementation process was planned and a pedagogy of action was developed, this was ideated keeping in mind that the scale of the problem at hand. It was primary that the scale of the impact be enough to address the problem. For this they came up with different methodologies as per the context, which included aspects of geology, demography, and ecology.

"We said, the first thing we need to do is plan it in our heads, how we want to do it. Which we were quite clear, the next thing is to demystify the technical portion, that means, at the crux make it simple, so that people can adapt it and implement it and then develop a pedagogy of action"(D'Souza, Interview, 2014)

It was also kept in mind that the problems be demystified, the solutions be simplified enough so that there was no dependence created. The organisation's aim was to build capacity to a level of self-sustenance. The leaders made sure this was done using a participatory approach;

this was the foundational in making sure that the process is inclusive. Risk taking and inquisitiveness is something shown by both the subjects involved. They talk about how trial and error, based on the learning by doing approach was something vital in their way of implementing things. This also helped them lead people based on concrete results and evidence. This helped in building trust with the communities. At the core remained the idea to help people build resistance against climate change, to make sure people are equipped for climate change adaptation in the coming future. In the lived experience of the subjects ethical action, and implementation of the work was hinged on the ways they identified the problem, how they found a solution to it and the ways in which it could be adapted in different places. This will be highlighted in the next section.

7.1.3. Methodology, Pedagogy and scaling up:

This section will discuss the cluster of sub topics mentioned above. These are essential to understand the experience of the subjects because of how these three aspects laid the foundation of how they experienced every challenge. As identified earlier the scale of the problem demanded a solution of that scale. Attempts made by the organisation wherever successful needed to be up scaled, but this couldn't be done in a standardized manner. A methodology needed to be developed in order to identify and understand the problem contextually and come up with a pedagogy of action as a solution. This triad was used in most situations where a challenge posed itself.

The subjects describe it as follows:

"It perfectly fit in our mandate. Our mandate is take it to scale because the need is great".(D'Souza, Interview, 2019)

The WASUNDARA approach is another example of the triad in action. It was an approach developed after the organisation conducted their first internal audit, it was an integrated approach meant at inclusivity. Their internal study found out that the benefits were going to the relatively better off; marginalised populations were still being excluded because of the recurring structure of power. Marcella elaborates:

"It is the WASUNDARA approach which incorporated all the challenges that surfaced from this entire internal study and this was discussed at every level to see how we integrate, how we get the marginalised community into it, how they are nominated. So it became one in which we were constantly learning. We still use the WASUNDARA approach, and apply it in the way we do things and it changed the way in which we had local contribution etc. so we were improving on our whole method to do it, this also was addressing the issue of the divide that was created between the better off getting more funds and the marginalised getting less fund. It is a challenge we are constantly facing and we've continued still to face and we still continue to look at it. We started a well thought out approach, and we started a whole pedagogy on how to integrate and get more sustainable development, where we take the entire community as a whole improving the lot of the poorer into it. This approach I have to say, after that we started implementing it in a few villages. The teams were working on newer methodologies, the team we had started engaging in newer ideas beyond watershed, while we

still continued with watershed. Newer challenges were taken up and everybody was engaged in designing methodology and testing it on the ground that we can upscale".(D'Souza, Interview, 2019)

Another vital part of experience was the net participatory planning approach developed. It was a means to help assess the vulnerability of a community towards erratic rainfall and climate change, in a participatory manner. This tool was derived in order to help the beneficiaries be a part of the vulnerability assessment process so that they understand where they stand, so that there was level of transparency in what the organisation knew and what the people knew. It was a big step towards democratization of the development process. Crispino elaborates:

"We had to develop a tool which would lead to something concrete, but in such a way that it was owned by the village community. Meaning the farmers or the owners of the land were required to assess the quality and capability of their land and design appropriate treatment measures, so that it was part of their work and they felt a sense of ownership. At that time we used to do an assessment using what we called the gross planning methodology. You draw a map, you do a survey and you walk through the land and do an assessment of the land, its capability and its slope. You don't have to refer to the owner of the land you don't have to refer to anyone. We planned not to do it as it becomes a technical approach where you will need experts who are not of that village. The real stakeholders are the villages they are the ones we are going to implement the project and if they do not know what's happening to the land and if they are not aware of the condition of the land they will not feel a part of the project and they will not maintain it in the future. So the participatory net methodology was used. There is a book on the net also about it. The methodology involved the village, the owners of the land, and the community while at the same time exposing them to the modern techniques of working and thinking. So science tradition and participation was brought together. So PNM is basically a biological approach which involves the villagers, modern science and technology in a spirit that truly works with consensus and activities. It's a planning methodology".(Lobo, Interview, 2019)

This layer of the theme captures the essence of how the individuals came up with concrete solutions grounded in approaches which were inclusive and stayed true to the style and philosophy of the organisation. This was something that gets highlighted in the later stages of their experience. When there is a direct comparison with for profit business, where NGOs are expected to work as efficiently as for profit businesses, this poses a question of how will this eventually affect the working of the NGO. Developing methodologies, pedagogies which are inclusive remain the essence of leadership, because in order to scale up and address the bigger problems that of the development discourse, it is essential to keep everyone on the same page.

7.2.   The "essence":

The analysis will conclude by talking about the essence and the identification of the essence. In the lived experience of the subjects, leadership is seen as a way to reach the ultimate goal,

development. Enabling people and making sure people are active stake holders is one of the most important aspects of their impact. Both the subjects showed inquisitiveness, asking critical questions and introspecting on them along their journey with the organisation. It was essential for them to keep asking questions as it helped shape their direction of work.

In terms of texture, Crispino had been on board since the beginning, he was part of each and every change that the community and the organisation had to adapt to. Marcella came on board a little later but her perspective that of gender and health brought the organisation closer to their vision. Her inclusion into the equation helped make the interventions inclusive and sustainable. It was her individual experience of gender and how it played out in the village spaces that helped make the future interventions more participatory and impactful.

Even though both the subjects have had varied individual experiences, there were overlapping tones in both. It was clear in their narratives that working for the greater need i.e. the discourse of development and the interventions designed around them was the primary motivation. In that discourse, for them having a contextualised, an integrated and participatory approach was extremely important. They firmly believed that enabling the communities was the way to approach the scale of the problem; it meant simplifying complex technical knowledge so that the villagers could understand it, adapt it and combine it with local knowledge. This process produced customized solutions which became the base for enabling people to reproduce this approach thereby taking them a step closer to self-sustenance. The narratives also bring out a unique way in which challenges were taken up, how change was incorporated in the organisation without losing sight of the greater need. There was a process of evolution of the organisation, the leaders and communities. The challenges they faced and the way they faced them helped the organisation evolve, along with that the leadership evolved, and the community evolved. This process was the essence of the subject's experience, evolving when the requirement was there in order to keep themselves relevant in the development discourse, so that the core value doesn't cease to exist. At the core remained the fundamental philosophy of democratizing development and enabling people.

Conclusion:

The rigorous engagementwith the topic leadership leaves you with numerous unanswered questions. More than answering a few it poses new questions altogether with respect to leadership and how it manifests in different forms in different contexts. Multiple authors have written about the phenomena, explaining it, describing it, giving it structures and frameworks. However, very few come to a universal meaning or definition of the phenomenon. This is because leadership is something contextual and rooted in lived experience of people as pointed out by (Kellerman, 2004)(Pfeffer, 1977)(Yukl, 2010)(Ali, 2012). Lived experiences if captured bring one closer to the reality of the experience. Using this thought this study is an attempt at capturing what it means to be a leader in the organisation WoTR? The quest for finding the "essence" of leadership, led the author towards many frameworks and models which helped bracket existing knowledge about leadership and helped the credibility of the study in terms of removing any sort of pre-existing bias. After delving with the literature a

theoretical framework to analyse the collected information was developed. This helped create the foundation to how the approach will help bring out the essence of leadership in the given context. This framework is something that can help unify the approach when it comes to studying leadership as a phenomenon. In India not many phenomenological studies have been conducted to capture the essence of leadership in different context, this framework enables that field, it can contribute extensively in the field of research as similar studies can be conducted in various contexts to map out the different ways in which leadership plays out in lived experience. It can contribute towards understanding leadership in India, in different sectors and domains, different textures like gender, class, and position can be incorporated to bring in more depth towards understanding the phenomenon.

In this particular study, lived experiences of leaders were captured to understand the essence of leadership. It is very different from previous attempts at understanding the phenomenon as this attempt is a more subjective one; it brings out certain flavours which have been missing in previous studies. Leadership in WoTR is about looking beyond the "self"; it is about committing to the greater good. It is about being inclusive; making sure participation is voluntary and comes with a sense of responsibility. Leadership is about enabling people and making them leaders who further the same vision. In essence it is about democratization of the process of development, how leaders can make sure local knowledge and technical knowledge can synergise to produce customized solutions. Making sure this process of synergising can be recreated and reproduced for any problem that the community comes across. Leadership is a way of being, and a means to make understand this way of being, so communities adopt and implement this in their own lives. Leadership is not a position, it is not a role and it is not something that individuals cannot strive to achieve/be. Leadership in its essence is a way of being, defined in context and reality, understood through different individuals and their vivid lived experience of the same.

Appendix:

Leader Profiles:

Crispino Lobo

Crispino is well-known in development circles for his knowledge and achievements in the fields of natural resource management, participatory watershed development and integrated water resources management. He was the Program Coordinator of the Indo-German Watershed Development Programme (IGWDP) from 1989 till 2001. In addition to co-founding WOTR in 1993, he has co-founded 3 other non-profits – Sampada Trust (ST), Sanjeevani Institute of Empowerment and Development (SIED) and the Sampada Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Foundation (SELF). An alumnus of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics (GIPE), India, and the Kennedy School of Government (KSG), Harvard University, USA, Crispino has five academic degrees covering the fields of philosophy, theology, psychology, economics and public administration.

Marcella D'souza

Marcella served as the Executive Director of WOTR from 2006 to 2019. She also founded the Sampada Trust (ST), and initiated several innovative interventions in WOTR – including the establishment of the WOTR Centre for Resilience Studies (W-CReS). W-CReS is an applied research think tank that seeks to provide evidence based insights to improve policy making, program implementation and capacity building for enhancing adaptive capacities and resilience to climate change in rural areas. W-CReS is headed by Dr. Marcella D'Souza. A physician by training, she opted for Community Health early in her career. Marcella is an alumnus of the Government Medical College, Nagpur and a Takemi Fellow of the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH). She has spent more than 3 decades in rural development, six years of which were spent on the Andes Mountains in Peru, South America where she established and managed an extensive community-based rural health program. Marcella joined WOTR in 1995 as the Programme Coordinator for women's promotion in the Indo-German Watershed Development Programme (IGWDP). In this programme, she developed the pedagogy to integrate health, gender and women's empowerment in watershed development projects, which has been widely adopted.

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WASUNDARA Approach:

Wasundhara means 'caring earth'and for WOTR it also means WOTR Attentive to Social Unity for Nature, Development and Humanity in Rural Areas. The Wasundhara Approach adopted in 2005 has been implemented in over 200 villages, with far-reaching and self-sustaining impacts. It creates a development partnership between NGO and villagers based on regeneration of the resource base, transparency, equitable distribution of benefits, and gender equality – all components of eradicating poverty

Participatory Operational Pedagogy:

One of WOTR's major contributions has been the pioneering of an effective strategy for rapid, large-scale capacity building called the Participatory Operational Pedagogy (POP). Two innovative components of this pedagogy, which facilitated intensive participation and high quality of work, were the Net Planning Method for project preparation and the "Learning-By-Doing" system of training and accompaniment for project implementation.

This approach has been cited in the Common Approach for Watershed Development, Guidelines for government funded watershed projects in India.

Draught Prone Area Programme (DPAP):

The basic objective of the programme is to minimise the adverse effects of drought on production of crops and livestock and productivity of land, water and human resources ultimately leading to drought proofing of the affected areas. The programme also aims to promote overall economic development and improving the socio-economic conditions of the resource poor and disadvantaged sections inhabiting the programme areas

Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP)–

The IWMP is launched with an aim to restore the ecological balance by harnessing, conserving and developing degraded natural resources such as soil, vegetative cover and water and create sustainable livelihoods for asset less.

Shramdan:

It is a concept taken as a part of employment guarantee act which asks the villagers to contribute labour to help build their watersheds and for soil conservation work. It is taken as a voluntary donation from as a means to show commitment towards the work being done.

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