

Introduction.

This portfolio is going to be looking at leadership. The first part will discuss what leadership is, what makes a good leader and the traits that they may have and will also look at leadership and if gender has an impact on the style that is used.

The next three parts will be critically analysing three different leadership styles that can be used in a setting and examples that can be linked to these three styles. Although there are many types of leadership styles that can be used within a setting, this portfolio will be discussing the autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire style of leadership.

What is leadership?

According to Benedictine University (2018), when people talk about leadership they just tend to talk about different traits, characteristics or behaviours that define leaders. However, they do state that leadership is about the performance of the team, group or setting. Tamang (2013) sees leadership very similar to this and go on to say that the definition of leadership is a person that guides others and to show by example. Hallet (2013) believe that a leader's role in an early years setting is to support and mentor other practitioners. Pride et al (2010) believes that today most people believe that there is no best leadership style to follow.

Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute (2018) state to have success in your setting then good leadership is essential. When leadership is done well in an early years setting, Welsh Government (2015) believe that this can help to improve attendance with both staff and children, that it can also improve the learners behaviour and attainment and by having a positive leader can also strengthen the setting. This view can also be seen by Hallet (2013) as she goes on to say that it is central to raising good quality in an early years setting when taking on a leadership role. Sylva et al. (2004) states how research that has been carried out has shown that when there has been good leadership in a setting, children have made better progress all round.

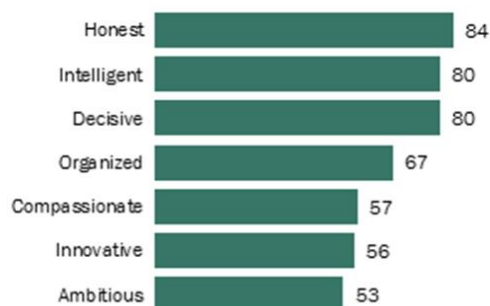
Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute (2018) believe that to be a good leader then some of the traits that you must have are: the ability to motivate others, social awareness, self-direction, self-awareness and to also have a vision. Pew Research Center (2015) would agree with this statement and believe that some traits are more

important than others. Some of these traits that they believe to be of importance are, honesty, intelligence, being organised, compassionate and ambitious. This can be seen in Table 1 where it can be seen that people believe that honesty is the most important. Welsh Government (2015) state that when working in an early years setting then it is vital for leaders to work closely with families. Community Toolbob (2017) believe that people follow people that they believe in and also who they trust in to help them achieve their own personal goals that they want to achieve.

Table 1

Which Leadership Traits Matter Most?

% saying it is absolutely essential for a leader to be ...



Source: Pew Research Center survey, Nov. 12-21, 2014 (N=1,835)

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

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(Source: Pew Research Center, 2015)

Muijs et al. (2004) state how females tend to occupy leadership roles in the early years settings. However, Rodd (1999) proposes that many females have problems identifying the need for leadership Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2007) both state how the majority of the workforce in an early years setting are females.

Muijs et al. (2004) states how different leadership styles are used differently from those used by male leaders. However, Evetts (1994) and Coleman (2001) disagree with this and both go on to say how studies have shown that there is no evidence to support the statement made by Muijs et al (2004) and state that when it comes to gender there is no differences in leadership styles. Oates and Hey (2014) believe how the style of leadership that is adopted is more important than the qualities needed by a leader.

Autocratic Leadership.

An autocratic leader can also be known as an authoritarian leader according to Cherry (no date) Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (no date) believe that an autocratic leadership style is often used in a crisis. An example of an autocratic leader could be smelling burning or seeing flames coming from the kitchen. An autocratic leader needs to make a quick decision in pressing the fire alarm and taking charge in telling the staff to evacuate the building immediately and ensuring that all members of staff follow the correct procedures that are in place. Cherry (no date) would agree with this example as she believes that an autocratic leader has complete control over all decisions that are being made with little input from the rest of the team.

An autocratic style of leadership as stated by Sadler (2003) is a leader that makes all the decisions and imposes them on the rest of the team and then expects the team to then put them in to effect without any questions. Khan et al (2015) explain how employees are expected to obey orders without having the leader giving any explanations. Gill (2014) goes on to say how autocratic leaders tend to make all the decisions by themselves, with little or no input from other members of the team and that the autocratic leader is usually one person making these decisions. Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (no date) state how an autocratic leader hold a lot of power over their team and would agree with Gill (2014) that the team have little opportunity to make suggestions, even if these suggestions would be in the best interest for everyone. Iqbal (2011) also go on to say how there is no input from other members of the team. The autocratic leader could also be called the dictator leader. This leader tells the team what to do and supervises them (Iqbal, 2011). Siraj-Blatchford and Hallet (2014) believe that leaders must posses a set of qualities and skills to influence and motivate others to do what they want doing.

Gill (2014) states that the autocratic style of leadership is usually seen in certain military, political leaders and sport coaches. However, Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (no date) believe that this style of leadership can be effective for some sort of routine and unskilled jobs and Khan et al (2015) state that this type of leadership is not always bad and can be seen as one of the most effective styles to use.

Gill (2014) believes that an autocratic leader is important in many work place environments. Gill (2014) goes on to say how this tends to be the least popular leader style however it is one of the most common styles of leadership that is used. There are many advantages and disadvantages that can be seen when using the autocratic style of leadership. Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (no date) believe that one of these benefits is that work gets done quickly and efficiently. Gill (2014) would agree with this and goes on to say how an autocratic leader can be effective when decisions need to be made quickly and how it keeps members of the team from missing important deadlines that need to be met. Khan et al (2015) believes that using this styles benefits new and untrained employees who do not know which tasks to perform or procedures to follow.

The disadvantages of an autocratic leader as stated by Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (no date) believe that most people do not like to be told or treated this way. This can then lead to a high level of absenteeism and also a high staff turnover. Khan et al (2015) would agree with this and goes on to say that autocratic leaders tend to use threats and punishment to influence their employees and tend not to trust their employees. Other disadvantages of this style of leadership as stated by Gill (2014) is that modern employees may not react well to this kind of leadership and how it can also discourage team creativity. Khan et al (2015) also state how employees talents are not recognised, so therefore there will be no opportunities for them to get a promotion. People tend to disconnect with autocratic leaders who are females and are generally more unliked than autocratic men (Eagly and Carli, 2007). Johnston and Nahmad-Williams (2009) believe that an autocratic leader in an early years setting may have established the setting themselves which then gives them the power to control all aspects of the setting, Sadek and Sadek (2004) state that they can then impose their own style on the setting and their staff. Rodd (2013) believes that when working in an early years setting the leader must be able to influence the behaviour of the other members of the team so that goals are achieved.

Democratic Leadership.

According to Khan et al (2015), the democratic leader style can also sometimes be known as the participative leader as it encourages all members of the team to be

involved. University of Aberdeen (no date) state how a democratic leader is someone who encourages participation from the rest of the team and also empowers employees. An example of what a democratic leader could be is during a staff meeting in a setting. This could be doing the weekly activity plan and getting all staff to contribute an idea of what they would like in place. Johnson and Hackman (2018) and Michigan State University (2014a) would agree with this as they state how a democratic leader involves all members of the team in setting goals and also making sure that all members of the team have an equal opportunity to express their own opinions.

Chemers (1984) defined a democratic leadership on the importance of group participation. This is also seen by Choi (2007) who go on to say how the participation from the team plays a key role. Similar to this, Gill (2016) believes that this style of leadership requires a special type of leader, however it also requires special group of participants. According to University of Aberdeen (no date) they believe that when a team is being led by a democratic leader then they have a high job satisfaction and that they are more productive as they are more involved in most of the decision making. This can also be seen by Changing Minds (2016) as they state that the leader involves everyone in the decision making process, however, Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (no date) state that the final decision may be from the leader who will have the final say.

University of Aberdeen (no date) believe that this type of leadership is most suitable when working in a team and Michigan State University (2014a) state how research has shown that this type of leadership is one of the most effective when working in a team. Manhattan College (2018) believe that the reasons for the popularity of this style of leadership is due to the advantages. These advantages according to Manhattan College (2018) is that the employees often feel that they are heard and that they are valued and Johnson and Hackman (2018) go on to say how the leader often tends to reward good work from their employees and punishment is often used as a last resort. Another advantage as stated by Manhattan College (2018) are that team members are always assured that there are no bad ideas which then gives everyone the confidence in speaking up and sharing their ideas. As they have the confidence in sharing their ideas , Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (no date) believe that this can then help to develop their skills. This can then encourage

employees to grow on the job which can then lead to gaining a promotion according to Khan et al (2015). Gill (2016) believes how the democratic style of leadership is based on mutual respect and due to this Gill (2016) states that absenteeism is lower amongst employees with a stronger commitment to perform and Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (no date) states that team members often tend to have a higher job satisfaction.

Although there are advantages to using the democratic style of leadership, Gill (2016) believes that there are also disadvantages that can be seen. Gill (2016) believes that due to everyone having an input and sharing their ideas, making fast, incisive decisions can be difficult and sometimes impossible. This can then lead to having missed deadlines. This point can also be seen by Michigan State University (2014a) as they go on to say how decision making takes far longer when being compared to other styles of leadership and therefore if a decision needs to be made quickly then this type of leadership may not be the best in the situation. However, Bhatti et al (2012) believes that although the process does take longer, the end results tend to be better. Another disadvantage as stated by Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (no date) is that not all team members have the knowledge to provide a high quality input and may feel a little uneasy when it is their turn to give their ideas.

Siraj-Blatchford and Hallet (2014) believe that when working in an early years setting, it is important for the leader to promote feelings of trust and motivation. The democratic leader is responsible for making decisions and involving all members of the team by communicating and encouraging them (Siraj-Blatchford and Hallet, 2014).

Laissez- faire leadership

According to Good therapy (2015) Laissez-faire leadership is sometimes referred to as benevolent neglect. Manhattan College (2018b) state how a laissez-faire leadership means that the leader tends to have a hands off approach when it comes to decision making. An example of a laissez-faire leader when working in an early years setting is all members of staff running the daily routines and activities with the children and the leader is in the office all day having no input with the decisions that are being made. Bhatti et al (2012) would agree with this example as they go on to

say how all members of the team have complete freedom to do as they please and Johnson and Hackman (2018) state how the team are free to setting their own goals. Khan (2013) believes that this type of leader avoids close relationships with their team and lets the team do as they please. Khan et al (2015) states that the leader gives all the power to the team and that they must then determine goals, make decisions and also resolve problems that arise on their own. Magomaeva (2013) believes that a laissez-faire leader is identified as a leader who does not take responsibility for their own actions. Cherry (no date) explains how research has found that this style of leadership leads to the lowest productivity amongst the team. However, Manhattan College (2018b) believe that this style of leadership approach tends to make the thrive as they feel a greater sense of freedom and have more responsibilities although Johnson and Hackman (2018) state that it can only be effective when the team are motivated and knowledgeable which can then lead to better results when left alone. Robins and Callan (2009) state how laissez-faire leaders believe in their team and that the team can work well on their own with no interference, unless help is needed. However, Manhattan College (2018b) believe that with the team having so much freedom and responsibilities can sometimes be overwhelming as they feel that their duties are too much. Cayne (2010) states that a team led by a laissez-faire leader often feel frustrated with the lack of direction that they are given. Similar to this, Manhattan College (2018b) state how the team may become resentful to their leader as they may perceive them as being absent as Magomaeva (2013) goes on to say that the team often feels that their leader is unavailable to them. Khan (2013) believes that employees can become disinterested and resentful to the setting that they are in when being led by a laissez-faire leader. Khan et al (2015) states how this style should not be used when employees feel insecure at the unavailability of their leader.

AgriLife Extension (2010) believe that there are advantages to having a laissez-faire leader in a setting and states how this type of leadership tends to be popular. A reason for the popularity, according to Khan et al (2015) is due to the freedom and the freedom to choose. Khan (2013) also believes that another advantage of this style of leadership is that it can boost the commitment of the team so that they can achieve their goals. Although there are advantages to this style of leadership there are also disadvantages, Robinson and Callan (2009) believe that staff could take

advantage as there are no boundaries or expectations set for them. This can also be seen by Khan et al (2015) as they go on to say how the team can misuse the rules and that this could be down to them feeling that they have no responsibilities within the setting. Cherry (no date) states that where team members lack experience and knowledge this style of leadership is not ideal when they need to complete tasks and also make decisions by themselves. This is a similar view to AgriLife Extension (2015) as they go on to say how this type of leadership will only work when the team are highly skilled. They also go on to say that if people are untrained and unready to go it alone then it may lead to the setting sliding in to chaos and confusion.

Khan et al (2015) believes that this type of leadership is most effective when employees take pride in their work and have the drive to successfully to do it on their own, however, Michigan State University (2014b) believes that a large amount of trust is required within the team for this type of leadership to work. Although this style of leadership implies a hands off approach, according to Cherry (no date) many leaders still remain open for their team to discuss any issues to them and to also provide any feedback that they wish to be given. Good therapy (2015) believe that when employees receive little or no feedback they struggle to know whether they are doing their job correctly. Michigan State University (2014b) believes that a good laissez-faire leader will offer a guided type of freedom which provides the team with everything that they need to accomplish their goals.

Conclusion

To conclude this portfolio it has looked at what leadership is and how it can be important in settings, not only for the staff but also for the children attending the setting. It also discussed some of the traits that are required and also whether gender has an effect on what style of leadership is used. The portfolio then looked at the three different styles of leadership. These being the autocratic, the democratic and the laissez-faire leaders.. It looked at all three which showed how there are advantages and disadvantages of using each style.

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