University of Wales Trinity Saint David

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Assessment Title: *Leadership in Contemporary Organisations: A Critical Analysis of Three Goleman Leadership Styles*

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Introduction

Leadership plays an important role in how organisations operate and grow, especially when leaders need to guide employees through change and keep teams working effectively. In today's fast-changing business environment, leaders are expected to do more than manage daily tasks. They need to support people, make decisions and help organisations respond to new challenges. In practice, the way a leader behaves can directly influence motivation, teamwork and overall performance.

This essay explores leadership using Goleman's (2000) framework of leadership styles. It focuses on three styles: Visionary, Democratic and Coaching. The aim of this essay is to explain how each leadership style works in practice, using real examples from organisations, and to examine its advantages, limitations and impact in different business situations.

Defining Leadership

Leadership has been defined in many ways in management literature, but most definitions focus on influence, direction and achieving shared goals. Northouse (2021) describes leadership as a process in which an individual influences a group to achieve a common objective. This definition shows that leadership is not only about authority, but about working with people to achieve results in practice. Similarly, Yukl (2020) explains that leadership involves guiding and supporting collective efforts, especially in situations that require coordination and change.

Research also highlights the importance of relationships between leaders and employees. According to Mullins and Rees (2023), leadership plays a key role in motivating staff, shaping organisational culture and maintaining performance in changing environments. Goleman (2000) emphasises that emotional intelligence is essential for effective leadership, because leaders need to understand people's reactions and manage emotions during change. Northouse (2021) also explains that

modern leaders must adapt their behaviour to different situations in order to maintain stability and performance.

Visionary Leadership

Visionary leadership focuses on creating a clear direction and helping people understand where the organisation is heading in the future. According to Goleman (2000), a visionary leader explains the purpose of change and shows employees how their work contributes to long-term success. This style is particularly important in modern organisations, where markets change quickly and companies need new ideas to remain competitive. Instead of closely controlling employees, a visionary leader builds confidence and encourages people to work towards a shared goal.

A strong example of visionary leadership can be seen in the work of James Dyson, a British inventor and entrepreneur. Dyson became known for developing the first bagless vacuum cleaner, but his success did not happen quickly. He spent several years testing new designs and created more than 5,000 prototypes before achieving a working product. Dyson (1998) explains that innovation often requires persistence and repeated experimentation. London Business School (2016) also highlights that Dyson's long-term vision and determination played a key role in the company's success.

This example shows how visionary leadership works in practice. Dyson focused on long-term goals rather than short-term difficulties, which helped his team stay motivated and continue working towards innovation. Employees could see that their work had purpose, which increased commitment and supported continuous improvement. In business environments where organisations face uncertainty or strong competition, this type of leadership helps maintain direction and encourages innovation.
However, visionary leadership also has limitations. If the leader communicates an unrealistic vision or ignores practical challenges, employees may lose trust and motivation. In addition, focusing too strongly on the future may create problems in daily

operations. For this reason, visionary leadership is most effective when a clear vision is supported by realistic planning and regular communication with employees.

Democratic Leadership

Democratic leadership is based on listening to employees and involving them in decisions that affect the organisation. According to Goleman (2000), this leadership style focuses on participation, teamwork and open communication. Instead of making decisions alone, democratic leaders ask for opinions and encourage discussion. This approach helps employees feel respected and included, which can improve motivation and create a stronger team.

A clear example of democratic leadership can be seen in the work of Indra Nooyi, who led PepsiCo for many years. During her time as Chief Executive Officer, she was known for listening carefully to employees and encouraging open conversations across the organisation. She believed that leaders should understand how decisions affect people and the business at the same time (Nooyi, 2021). For example, when the company began to focus more on healthier products and responsible business practices, Nooyi asked managers and staff to share their views before making important changes. She wanted people to feel involved in the process and understand the purpose behind new decisions. This helped build trust and support within the company and made employees more willing to work towards common goals (Leadership Story Bank, 2025). This approach helped the company build stronger relationships with employees and supported long-term business performance.

As a result, this leadership approach supported organisational stability and helped the company maintain strong performance during periods of change.
This example shows how democratic leadership works in practice. When leaders listen to employees and allow them to express their opinions, people feel more confident and engaged in their work. Employees are also more likely to support change when they understand why it is happening. Democratic leadership can improve teamwork because

people bring different ideas and experiences. In modern organisations, where cooperation is essential, this style can help create a positive working environment and stronger relationships between managers and employees.

However, democratic leadership also has some limitations. Decision-making can take more time because leaders need to listen to different opinions and consider various options. In situations that require quick action, such as during a crisis, this style may slow down the process. For this reason, democratic leadership works best when leaders balance discussion with clear direction and are ready to make final decisions when necessary.

Coaching Leadership

Coaching leadership focuses on helping employees develop their skills and reach their full potential. According to Goleman (2000), this leadership style is based on guidance, feedback and long-term development rather than short-term results. Coaching leaders spend time understanding the strengths and weaknesses of their team members and support them in improving their performance. Instead of simply giving instructions, they explain, encourage learning and help people grow in their roles. This approach can increase confidence, motivation and job satisfaction, especially when employees feel supported and trusted.

A clear example of coaching leadership can be seen in the work of Pep Guardiola, one of the most successful football managers in modern sport. Although he is not a Chief Executive Officer, he plays a key leadership role in developing people, making decisions and shaping team performance. Guardiola is widely known for focusing on the development of individual players and helping them improve their skills over time. He believes that success is achieved when people understand their role, receive regular feedback and are given opportunities to learn from mistakes. In his teams, players are encouraged to analyse their performance, practise new techniques and continuously develop their abilities (Perarnau, 2014).

For example, Guardiola often works closely with players during training sessions, explaining tactical decisions and giving detailed feedback about their performance. Instead of criticising mistakes, he focuses on teaching and improvement. This supportive approach helps players gain confidence and perform at a higher level. Many footballers who worked with Guardiola improved their skills and became more effective team members because they received individual attention and clear guidance. This shows how coaching leadership works in practice by building competence and encouraging continuous learning (Perarnau, 2014). As a result, this leadership approach helped create a strong team culture and supported consistent organisational performance.

However, coaching leadership also has some limitations. It requires time, patience and strong communication skills from the leader. In busy or stressful situations, leaders may not always have enough time to focus on individual development. In addition, some employees may prefer clear instructions rather than coaching and feedback. For this reason, coaching leadership works best when leaders balance support and development with clear expectations and performance goals.

Contemporary Leadership Skills

Modern organisations operate in fast-changing environments, so leaders need practical skills to manage people and respond effectively to challenges. Leadership today involves adapting to change, communicating clearly and supporting employees through uncertainty. According to Daft (2021), effective leaders combine technical knowledge with interpersonal skills and emotional understanding to guide teams successfully. These skills also influence how leaders apply visionary, democratic and coaching styles in practice.

ne of the most important skills for contemporary leaders is communication. Clear communication helps employees understand expectations, reduces confusion and

improves teamwork. Mullins and Rees (2023) explain that communication is essential for coordinating activities and keeping employees focused on shared goals.

Another key skill is adaptability. Modern organisations face new technologies, shifting customer expectations and constant change. Leaders must adjust their approach and support employees during transitions. Cameron and Green (2020) highlight that leaders play an important role in helping people understand change and reduce resistance.

Strategic thinking is also essential. Leaders need to make decisions that support long-term success as well as daily performance. Hitt, Ireland and Hoskisson (2020) explain that strategic leaders identify opportunities, manage risks and help organisations remain competitive.

Conclusion

Leadership plays a critical role in the success of contemporary organisations, especially in environments shaped by change, competition and continuous development. This essay has shown that different leadership styles can be effective in different situations. Visionary leadership helps organisations create direction and support innovation, democratic leadership strengthens trust and cooperation, and coaching leadership supports long-term development and stronger team performance. The examples of James Dyson, Indra Nooyi and Pep Guardiola show that leadership is not only about theory, but about practical actions that influence people and organisational outcomes.

In practice, effective leaders need to adapt their style to the situation, the needs of employees and the goals of the organisation. They also need strong communication, adaptability and strategic thinking in order to lead successfully. Therefore, leaders in contemporary organisations should use different leadership approaches when needed and combine clear direction with employee support and involvement.

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