

LEADERSHIP STYLES AND THEORIES IN AN EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY

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Abstract

In recent years, beyond their aim to survive and to sustain their presence by improving performance, more and more organizations are involved with some form of competition for customers, for gaining advantage on the utilization of scarce resources, leadership becoming the key critical factor for achieving this performance given the actual context of market globalization. The human activity has become a continuous learning, adaptation, competition and selection process.

The quest to understand leadership, across different sectors and disciplines, has easily proved that literature is vast in this field. This paper examines the concept of leadership, generally, and its relevance towards improving management activities. After decades of research it seems that issues are complex, leadership being considered “the most studied and least understood concept of any in the social sciences” (Bennis and Nanus, 1997).

Many researchers and practitioners have developed a consensus that the progression of thinking over the years has developed a belief that leadership is a flexible developmental process. Our attempt to outline the features of the concept made it necessary to overview some common definitions of leadership.

The paper begins with overview of the meaning and concept of leadership and then followed by an short examination of different leadership theories and styles of leadership. Main theories that emerged during 20th century include: the Great Man theory, Trait theory, Contingency and Situational theories, Skills theory, Behavioral theory, Transformational, Transactional and Participative leadership theory.

This paper concludes that success is certain in different types of activities if leadership styles, principles and theories are properly applied in organizations’ activities in different fields.

Keywords: leadership, theories, styles, characteristics, organizational performance

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1. Introduction

Leadership continues to be a topic of interest in the management literatures, but there is no universal definition of this term. Leadership is often seen as one of the most important and effective responses to the challenges and opportunities presented by the global context. It is very important in every organization, determining values, culture, change, tolerance and employee motivation.

As a natural consequence of an increasingly interest in the psychology of leadership over the last one hundred years, a number of different leadership theories have been launched to clarify exactly how and why certain people become great leaders. What exactly generates a remarkable leader? Do we need certain personality traits to be considered better suited to leadership roles?, or do characteristics of the situation make it more likely that certain people will take charge?

We can talk about an ancient interest in leadership throughout human history, but only in recent years a number of formal leadership theories have materialized. Interest in leadership increased during the early part of the twentieth century. Early leadership theories focused on what qualities distinguished between leaders and followers, while subsequent theories looked at other variables such as situational factors and skill levels.

It is clearly demonstrated that success is attributable, within a company, to three important factors, such as: organizational performance, employee job satisfaction and employee affective

commitment (Drucker, 2007), while valuable studies suggested that leaders manage to motivate employees to be competitive through charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation or individual consideration.

The role of a manager is even more complex, because he will no longer act as a person who holds “the absolute truth”, making decisions to impose to others, but he has to become a leader to ensure an adequate organizational environment where employees can manifest their abilities and initiative at their best.

2. Literature review

There are so many different ways to define leadership, that it is hard to agree with a single working definition. In order to understand this extremely vast concept, we all must accept that, beyond the fact leadership is not just a person or group of people in a high position, our effort to clarify it is not complete without understanding interactions between a leader and his or her followers.

Our attempt to outline the features of the concept made it necessary to overview some common definitions of leadership. Thus, according to Cohen, leadership is “the art of influencing others to their maximum performance to accomplish any task, objective or project” (1990, p. 9). Leadership is the “art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations” (Kouzes, J.M., Posner, B.Z., 1995, p.30). Also, leadership is a purposeful relationship, which occurs episodically among participants, who use their individual skills in influence, to advocate transforming change (Michael S. Kearns, 2005). According to Wolinski (2010) leadership is a process that involves influence with a group of people toward the realization of goals.

An explanation of the present unusual state, where leadership is considered “the most studied and least understood concept of any in the social sciences” (Bennis and Nanus, 1997), is that researchers usually define leadership according to their individual perspectives and the aspects of the phenomenon of most interest to them, Stogdill (1974, p. 259) pointing out that “there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept”. Summarizing all these, leadership can easily be considered a continuous process in which a person tries to influence his followers to establish and accomplish a goal, by exercising his power to influence people either by motivating followers to get the job done or by rewarding or punishing those who do or do not perform to the level of expectation.

3. Theories of leadership

For decades, leadership theories have been the source of numerous studies. What makes some people excel in leadership roles? What is the engine? Specialists in the field are trying to explain how and why certain people become leaders. Such theories often focus on the characteristics of leaders, but also on some attempts to identify behaviors that people can adopt to improve their own leadership skills in different situations.

Both in reality and in practice, many have tried to define what makes a true leader to stand out from the rest of the people. There are as many theories about leadership as there are philosophers, researchers and teachers who have studied and finally published their theory on leadership.

A profound and clear analysis of presented definitions (and other) directly or indirectly reflect the idea of a theory or school of leadership.

According to Cherry (2012) several major leadership theories can be identified. While the earlier of these focused on the qualities that distinguish leaders from followers, later theories looked at other variables including situational factors and skill levels.

The most important and, undoubtedly, influential leadership theories are briefly presented in Table 1, seeking to underline the evolution of these traits, attributes or situations that determine the choice for or the way people lead.

Table 1 *General Theories of Leadership*

<i>Theory/school</i>	<i>Description</i>
Great Man or Trait school	Assume that the capacity for leadership is inherited and study particular personality or behavioral characteristics or traits to understand their accomplishments as leaders
Behavioral school	Describes leadership in terms of people – and task-orientation, suggesting that people can learn to become leaders through training and observation.
Situational school	Emphasizes the importance of in shaping leaders' responses to be more relationship or task motivated, or more authoritative or participative.
Contingency school	Suggests that leaders' influence is contingent on particular variables related to the environment determining leadership styles
Transactional or Transformational school	Focus on the connection and the exchanges formed between leaders and followers. A transactional leader's job is to create structures that make it abundantly clear what is expected of followers and the consequences associated with meeting or not meeting expectations, while transformational leaders are focused on the performance of group members, but also on each person to fulfilling his or her potential.
Participative theory	The ideal leadership style is one that takes the input of others into account.
Skills theory	States that learned knowledge and acquired skills/abilities are significant factors in the practice of effective leadership.

Source: author's work based on the study *Global Definitions of Leadership and Theories of Leadership Development: Literature Review*

Michael (2010) pointed out that current leadership theories described leaders based on traits, behaviors, attributes and situations or how the influence and power are used to achieve objectives of the organization. Situations, contexts, culture, working environment, new laws and regulations, information overload, organizational complexities and psycho-socio developments remarkably impact the leadership concept thereby, making it commensurate to the changing organizational dynamics (Amabile, Schatzel, Moneta & Kramer, 2004, pp. 5-32).

4. Leadership Styles

A style represents a distinctive or characteristic behavior, a particular method of acting. The term was introduced for the first time by G.W. Allport (1937), with reference to different types of personality or behavior and it is specific to psychology.

The literature about leadership styles is superfluous. Over time, finding a conclusive definition of leadership style has been made more difficult by operating a distinction between the concept of "leadership type" and "leadership style." If at the beginning of the study, around the 60s-70s, the two notions were used in a non-discriminatory manner, over time, the distinction between the type of leadership (all qualities, knowledge and aptitudes) and the style of leadership (the way of expressing and manifesting the type of leadership) has emerged.

There are many different leadership styles distinguished by many different authors. Some of these leadership style classifications are well known in the literature. Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee (2001) distinguished, within their work *Primal leadership, The hidden driver of great performance. Breakthrough leadership*, six emotional leadership styles: the visionary leader (emphasis on empathy), the coaching leader (connect organizational goals with the goals of individuals), the affiliative leader (emotional needs over work needs), the democratic leader

(commitment of employees via participation), the pace-setting leader (challenges and sets goals for employees), the commanding leader (uses authority to give directions to employees). In the table below one can find a concentrated description of the six based on five criteria: the leader's modus operandi, the style described in a phrase, emotional intelligence competencies, description of situations with maximum effect of leadership style chosen, overall impact on climate.

Table 2 *The Six Leadership Styles at a Glance*

	Commanding	Visionary	Affiliative	Democratic	Pacesetting	Coaching
The leader's modus operandi	Demands immediate compliance	Mobilizes people toward a vision	Creates harmony and builds emotional bonds	Forges consensus through participation	Sets high standards for performance	Develops people for the future
The style in a phrase	“Do what I tell you”	“Come with me”	“People come first”	“What do you think?”	“Do as I do, now”	“Try this.”
Underlying emotional intelligence competencies	Drive to achieve, initiative, self-control	Self-confidence, empathy, change, catalyst	Empathy, building relationships, communication	Collaboration, team leadership, communication	Conscientiousness, drive to achieve, initiative	Developing others, empathy, self-awareness
When the style works best	In a crisis, to kick start a turnaround, or with problem employees	When changes require a new vision, or when a clear direction is needed	To heal rifts in a team or to motivate people during stressful circumstances	To build buy-in or consensus, or to get input from valuable employees	To get quick results from a highly motivated and competent team	To help an employee improve performance or develop long-term strengths
Overall impact on climate	Negative	Most strongly positive	Positive	Positive	Negative	Positive

Source: Goleman, Daniel, *Leadership that Gets Results*, Harvard Business Review, March-April 2000, pp. 82-83

According to some authors (Ibara, 2010, 74-76), there are a number of factors that can help to determine which type of leadership style is most effective and/or when to draw on a different or combination of leadership styles, including: the size of an organization, degree of interaction/communication, personality of members, goal congruency, level of decision making.

Conclusions

Leadership is the art or process of influencing people to perform assigned tasks willingly, efficiently and effectively and, as a natural consequence, one of the vital factors for improving firm performance. Leaders, as the key decision-makers, determine the acquisition, development, and deployment of organizational resources, the conversion of these resources into valuable products

and services, and the delivery of value to organizational stakeholders. Thus, they are strong sources of managerial and sustained competitive advantage (Rowe, 2001 *apud* Mitra et al, 2016).

In today's dynamic workplace, organizations need leaders to cope with new challenges, and transform organizations in order to achieve a competitive advantage in the marketplace. In addition, organizations need managers to maintain a smoothly functioning workplace, and to utilize resources effectively. Finally, a well balanced organization should have a mix of leaders and managers to succeed (Kotterman, 2006).

There are many different ways of thinking about leadership, ranging from focusing on the personality traits of great leadership to emphasizing aspects of the situation that help determine how people lead. Like most things, leadership is a highly multi-faceted subject and it is a mixture of many factors that help determine why some people become great leaders. Understanding leadership involves understanding interactions between a leader and his or her followers.

Understanding the connection between leadership style and organizational performance is definitely important, as it is, for a leader, to find the path, the methods, to choose the right approaches to stimulate the performance of employees within a company.

This paper represents an additional conceptual approach, an alternative for a holistic understanding of leadership. The paper identifies some of the leadership theories prevalent in organizations and examines their relevance.

Leadership literature reveals that theories have been refined and modified with passage of time and none of the theory is completely irrelevant.

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