

Leadership Styles in Early Years

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The analyzation of three leadership styles and the exploration of their influences on effective team working within early years settings.

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Leadership is the process where a person directs or influences a group of people to achieve a shared objective (Sharma and Jain, 2013). Leaders which accomplish the process by employing their professional skills and knowledge are called the *Process Leadership Theory* (Jago, 1982). However, leaders' performances could be impacted by their traits such as their personal values, beliefs or morality, which are differentiated by their level of skills and knowledge. This will then be defined as the *Trait Leadership Theory* (Jago, 1982). Beyond, when leaders accomplish the process by the application of a set of behaviors or styles that were evaluated as valid leaderships, will be the *Behavioral and Style theories* (Spillane et al., 2004). Moreover, the consideration in which leadership styles or behaviors are influenced by the situation, environment, or the group rather than the leader him/herself, is identified as the *Situational and Contingency theory* (Hemphill, 1949).

In this article, the main focus will be the essentialness of three different styles of leadership which is encompassed under the *Behavioral and Style theories* and their influences on early years team working aspects.

As mentioned earlier, leadership styles are the set of behaviors in which the leader perform to the group, in order to lead, direct or influence his/her team to accomplish their objectives and targets. According to the studies from Pierce and Dunham (1989), they initiated a model named *Dunham and Pierce's Leadership Process Model*. In the studies, four factors are identified as the core of every leadership process: leaders, followers, outcomes and context. This model provides insights where leadership is established by the incessant cycle of the leader, followers and context affect or be affected by the outcomes. Notably, Newstrom and Pierce (2010) added that the model highlighted the leader as the core element in resulting success or unsuccessful leadership.

Studies presented by Ulrich (no date) provided the definition of a leader, is the person who directs the team with his/her professional abilities, skills and knowledge to train, influence, or support the team for achieving the goal. Where Winston and Patterson (2006) added that the behaviour of the leaders, their beliefs, values and motivation also have a huge impact on leading a team. In the studies of Bass (1985) and Bass (1990), the development of how people transform into leaders was discussed. *The Bass' Theory of Leadership* explained three hypothesis of leadership development:

- *The Trait Theory*: defined people who equip the personality and the behaviours of the leadership role naturally.
- *The Great Events Theory*: is when an ordinary people experienced a crisis which released their potential for leadership qualities.
- *The transformational or Process Leadership Theory*: defines which people that learn to acquire the skills of being a leader.

His theory defined how leaderships are developed. Simultaneously, Sharma and Jain (2013) observed a various range of competencies and behaviours that are indispensable for successful leadership, which will be present later in the article.

Beyond, the studies of Pagon et al. (2008) explained leadership as an essential factor in management. Effective leadership helps to maximize the efficiency of the working team to accomplish their intentions. Winston and Patterson (2006) added that effective leadership enhances the process of work to become more effectual by providing a clear vision and a wide perspective for the team to comply. Ulrich (no date) presented that a leader can motivate the team with types of encouragements and influences. Which also provide guidance and supports for the team to follow and learn as they progress.

Additionally, a research published by Grijalva and Zhang (2016) highlights that narcissistic people have a high rate to assume control while a group does not have a leader. Where Baars (2015) explained that Narcissistic leadership tends to cause a lack of motivation to followers, as the leader often only place their own priority as the principal in work rather than the team or the project's priority, which may easily lead to an unsuccessful outcome in practice.

Implementing effective leadership in practice also helps to build a shared value and shared target for the team which calls a clearer perspective in practice. It helps to shape the care, learning provisions for children and shape the teaching for practitioners. Besides, Rodd (no date) identified that effective leadership is essential in early years practice, so as to enhance the quality of practice and to fulfill the development of each individual child by providing the best provision of care and education implemented by the team.

The *Democratic Leadership Style* is one of the three major styles of leadership initiated by a psychologist, Kurt Lewin in his studies (Lewin et al., 1939), which has also been considered as the foundation of most of the leadership and management approaches nowadays.

The primary principle of democratic leadership comprises by the leader involving the group in the decision-making process. Lewin et al. (1939) identified that the leader creates the opportunities for the team to share the responsibility in determining choices to create a shared and equal working condition, thus, to enhance the efficiency of the working process through having a shared value. This leadership allows the team to share individual ideas, professional knowledge and skills, as well as their experiences while accomplishing the working process. Each individual is encouraged to give a voice and be participate in the whole process (Tomlinson, 2010).

Democratic leadership style relies on the input of the group and its consensus. It encourages open discourse and comprises positive reinforcements and encouragements (Lewin et al., 1939). The responsibility for deciding and conducting the working process place on each member equally. However, the leader reserves the jurisdiction for a final decision.

Kent (2006) conveyed that democratic leadership creates a better relationship with the leader and the team in which it encourages more communication opportunities. A trustworthy and reliable relationship, therefore, conserves within the team when their voices are heard. Besides, Gastil (1994) analysed the effective communication in democratic leadership enhanced subordinates' motivation to achieve the objectives as they have been shown respect and trust in their abilities and professionalism. Which can develop sincere to the work, the team and the leader. Personal abilities, interests, and skills may be able to meet with individual roles within this leadership style (Choi, 2007).

Heiko (2011) provided insights about the *Humanistic Management Theory*, where the 'person' is considered as the foundation and the most essential principle within the whole management process. The theory consists of six principles, which includes the dependency on people – the essence of success is the congregation of knowledge, wisdom, skills and abilities, experience, creativity, and courage. The release and development of individual potential. The respect of individual's ability and personality. As well as the shared values, responsibility and targets (Michael, 2017). Democratic leadership fulfilled this management theory. Alma (2012) and Domenec (2003) indicated the Humanistic management theory enhance the efficiency of the working process through the trust, respect of individual's abilities and potential to sustain a high-level standard of progression by the satisfaction of both mentally and corporeally. Von Kimakowitz (no date) added the constancy of an effective working team maintains by the equality and impartiality of structure, system, values, and morality.

Beyond, the *T Management Theory* provides a similar perspective to the Humanistic Management theory. The T Management Theory focus on sharing all knowledge, skills, values and experience from each individual to enhance the whole performance (Ford, no date). The theory consists of the team sharing success, failure, knowledge and skills. Which also encourages the relationship between departments to exchange perspectives and ideas.

In addition, the *Theory Z* initiated by Ouchi (1980), developed from the work of *Theory X and Theory Y* by McGregor (1957), also provided a perspective about the essentialness of communication lead to successful management. Theory Z Ouchi (1980 and 1981) believed trusting, caring and understanding are the major characteristic of successful performance in team working. Ouchi (1981) presented that the emotional comfort from the leader may easily develop infinitely loyalty in work.

In this leadership style, the leader provides the approximate directions but not minor instructions that requires subordinates to follow step by step. It encourages flexibility when managing individual roles (Ray and Ray, 2012). Oncken and Wass (1999) initiated the *Monkey Management Theory*, which the monkey is representing as ‘the responsibility’ and was conveyed that every member in the team should undertake their own responsibility in their roles, mainly in making decisions. Democratic leadership provides the opportunities to be involved in the decision-making process, which Oncken and Wass (1999) identified this freedom of choice as the major principles to success when each individual maintains their own consciousness.

By contrast, the *Theory Y* established by McGregor (1957) provides insights about the hypothesis in which all humans possess a target and are enthusiastic to work hard on it. They will show their potential and the will to undertake responsibilities when the role is suitable to act as the stimuli for them to present their capability. Therefore, the Theory Y explains that people maintain their own consciousness and are able to motivate themselves, mostly when they possess the sense of achievements or self-reliance (McGregor, no date). Thus, encouragements and positive reinforcements will be the only principles for achieving successful performance as they maintained the ability to self-direct and self-control (Gannon, 2013). Where democratic leadership is comprised by the positive reinforcements and encouragements (Lewin et al., 1939).

Relating democratic leadership with early years practice, the most appropriate application of the style is during the planning of children's care and learning needs, the determination of planning setting's objectives or targets, the resolution and consideration before implementing new methodologies or pedagogy, strategies, the planning of rotas and major events (Ang, 2012). Conducting staff meetings and possessing school councils can represent the application of democratic leadership.

Democratic leadership is recognised as one of the most successful leadership styles in management (Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy, 2014), so as in early years settings. A research from Borhaug (2014) presented that 48.6% of early years managers did not wish to be managers, beyond, most of them wish to avoid conflict and dealing with arguments. In comparison with other leadership styles, democratic leadership helps to avoid these aspects by allowing everyone to share the responsibility in events.

Practitioners working in early years possess a high standard of self-confidence, self-reliance, and acknowledge the essentialness to undertake own responsibilities. They provide flexible and creative thinking styles in practice and acquire the ability to motivate themselves in work (Hallet, 2013). Democratic leadership allows the opportunities for equal and objective communications. Practitioners sharing the same value, target and responsibilities enhance the performance on maintaining high-standard provision in settings (Folkman, 2010).

However, Khan and Khan (2015) argue that democratic leadership is only suitable for long-term objectives that require detailed consideration, as this style requires a lot of time for meetings, besides, might lead to the situation of having too much ideas conveying and reach no agreement.

Examples of implementing democratic leadership in early years practice***Example 1:***

There is a child aged 2 starting in the nursery a week later. The manager of the nursery invited both parents and the child for a pre-visit to the nursery. Before the pre-visit, the manager informed the leader and the staffs of the toddler's group about the new coming child and the pre-visit. On the day of the pre-visit, after the manager has guided the family around the setting, the manager asked the leader of the toddlers to provide some information about their routines and provisions for the family. After the visit, the manager and the leader conduct a meeting about the transition provision for the child. They discussed care provisions such as the routines, meals and so forth to plan a suitable settling in the provision for the individual child. A week later, the child has started in the nursery. The manager and every staff members in the toddlers' team conduct another meeting to reflect the settling in of the child and discussed ideas that might help the child to settle in smoother in his transition period.

Example 2:

A year three class is going on a school trip to the zoo in the coming weeks. The manager held a meeting with the year three class teacher and the teaching assistants to plan the trip together. They discussed the preparation work that has to be conducted beforehand, for example, the risk assessments, the locations, the traveling, fees, the informs to the parents and so forth.

The *Autocratic Leadership* is another style in the three major leadership styles initiated by Lewin et al. (1939) and is considered as one of the most common management styles in former times.

The primary principle of autocratic leadership is the centralised power the leader has on the team. Lewin et al. (1939) explained that autocratic leaders will not pursue nor consider any suggestions from subordinates. The leader requires no input from the team, in which the leader will consider and make decisions independently according to his/her perspectives. An authoritarian leader will decide the whole process and requires subordinates to follow his/her expectations. Despite this, ordinarily, the leader will provide a clear set of instructions for each to follow. This leadership style focuses strongly on the command and mandate of the leader to the team. It involves less or none emotional encouragements, but financial based or negative reinforcements such as punishments to maintain the system of management.

Khan and Khan (2015) added that usually, only the leader will acknowledge the main intention or progress in work, subordinates are only expected for the accomplishment of the task to sustain the work progress. Michalko (2001) analysed that researches have shown results in which creativity is marginal under this leadership style. Dessler and Starke (2004) convey that people working under the authoritarian leadership are less motivated and are often seemed to have a distinct division in the relationship with the leader. Besides, Northhouse (2015) states that the emotional well-being of each individual can hardly be meet satisfy under this leadership.

Consequently, these principles attained the hypothesis in the *Theory X* established by McGregor (1957). Yet, it is the opposite hypothesis of the Theory Y that has been mentioned earlier in the article. The Theory X illustrates that humans do not possess the ability of self-motivation. Humans are considered as inherently indolent, which they need punishments, pressures, and intimidates in order to work their best. Theory X identified that minority amount of people possesses the capability of creativity and the potential to possess a target. In addition, Theory X argues that encouragements can only occur when an individual is physiologically, mentally and emotionally comfort, in another word, positive encouragements are hard to fulfill or established by others (McGregor, no date).

Therefore, if the hypothesis of Theory X is accurate, the application of democratic leadership is arduous to implement. Thus, autocratic leadership is more clear and coherent in enhancing the work process if stringency and rigorousness is the major factor for successful management (Gannon, 2013). Beyond, Baars (2015) identified researches that were conducted based on different styles of managers, has presented the point of view from most of the Theory X based managers, in which case they all believed that personal targets and group targets could not and will not be the same. This lead to the consideration of the effectiveness of leadership that are based on subordinates' self-motivation and having emotional encouragements, or those leadership styles that based on having a shared value, target and morality to demand synchronous for the success in performances, when the innermost being of individuals could not be the same.

However, *Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid* (Blake and Mouton, 1964 and 1985) established a managerial (or leadership) grid that computed two main behaviour of leadership – the concern for people and concern for production, and was calculated with the range from low to high on the graph to determine five leadership styles according to either people or product based performance. In which the *Task management style* presents in the grid is almost alike with the Theory X, that has correspondence with the autocratic leadership style, was identified with the result of having ‘high product & low people’. Where the effectiveness and successfulness of autocratic leadership are ambiguous if the ‘main principle (the person)’ of the *Humanistic Management Theory* (Heiko, 2011) has seemed to be oblivious in the management process. Beyond, subordinates tend to develop high reliance on the leader which might cause pressure to the leader according to the *Monkey Management Theory* presented by Oncken and Wass (1999).

Despite this, autocratic leadership could be beneficial in situations that require decisions to be made emergently. Besides, while leading a large group of people that too much ideas and apprehension may simply occur, in which case management will be challengeable and cause a decline in progression (Akor, 2014). Jacobson (2000) added that autocratic leadership may minimise the possibility of conflicts and confusion within the team, as it involves no input or agreements from the team but provides direct instructions for members to follow.

Autocratic leadership style could be effective in early years settings during urgent matters such as accidents or emergent decisions (Igbo, 2002). Besides, the establishment of setting's policies and procedures might also benefit from this leadership style. Furthermore, situations or matters that process better without flexibility and extensive concepts such as disciplinary matters also benefit with autocratic leadership (Bush, 2012).

An example of implementing autocratic leadership in early years practice

The manager was informed by a class teacher that apparently a student who is doing placement in her class was taking photos with her phone that has the involvement of some children in her class. Above all, the manager explained and checked that the student is aware of the policies in the settings such as the photography policy, confidentiality policy, data protection policy and so forth. The manager asked to check the student's phone with the presence of the class teacher and asked the student to delete all photos that have the involvement of children. The manager checked with the student to see have the photos were uploaded to the social media or other internet access to decide following actions. The manager contacted the placement officer of the student and decided whether the student should go or stay. After the deliberation of the case, the manager informed the parents of the children who were in the photo about the happening. Later in the days, the manager also reflected with all the staffs about this incident, to discuss a better way to avoid the happening, as well as to raise the seriousness of it.

The concept of *Transformational Leadership* was originally initiated by Downton (1973). The concept was then developed by Burns (1978) and his work was extended by the studies presented by Bass (1985). The main focus in transformational leadership is the evolvment of motivation and those influences from the leader directly to each member of the team. Burns (1978; 2003 and 2012) conveys that transformational leadership is assembled by four main factors: Inspirational Motivation; Intellectual Stimulation; Idealized Influence and Individualized Consideration.

In transformational leadership, the leader possesses a unique vision in which the followers are inspired and attracted to. These can be the future perspective from the leader and his/her progress to those intentions, or the leader's personality, beliefs, passion, and enthusiasm, or anything that each individual is inspired and wants to follow or support him/her to success (Rowold and Schlotz, 2009). In addition, followers under this style often possess the ability to motivate themselves enthusiastically and optimistically. This has realized the philosophy in Theory Y where people possess the ability to self-motive and self-direct. Besides, it also realized the hypothesis to success in management is providing appropriate stimulations and encouragements for individuals (McGregor, no date).

Transformational leadership requires members' involvements to achieve, but it does not specifically require inputs from subordinates (Burns, 1978). Leaders in this leadership style could be either democratic or autocratic. They will listen and value individual's ideas and inputs, but that only retain in the position of listening. The leader conducts independent considerations and makes a decision on their own. Usually, transformational leaders focus on the big perspective and delegate minor tasks to the team to achieve the intention (Bass and Riggio, 2006).

In transformational leadership, the faithful relationship with the leader and the team is one of the principal. The leaders in here usually act as the role model that followers seek to learn from, besides, followers often show exceedingly strong trusting and respect to the leader (Burns, 1978). Communications between the leader and the team are maintained flexibly and objectively. Which according to Theory Z, the trusting in relationship and communication presented to be the key factor for successful teamwork (Ouchi, 1980 and 1981).

The main difference in between transformational leadership with other leadership styles is that each member of the team possesses the same target and value that was influenced by the leader. Which has fulfilled the concept in the T Management Theory (Ford, no date), and the Humanistic Management Theory (Heiko, 2011) that having a shared value, believes and targets are the key principles for successful teamwork. This has also proved to the Theory X based managers that, personal and group targets could be the same and can lead to a more successful team working performance.

In the *Fiedler's Contingency Theory*, Fiedler (1967) presented an insight into two types of leader, the task-oriented leader and relationship-oriented leader. Besides, he also presented the hypothesis about two types of common situations in management. 1. The leader was chosen by the individual ability which was considered as the most appropriate person to lead in the specific situation and environment. 2. The leader is considered as the main factor, in which the whole situation changes according to him/her. Notably, Fiedler (1967) defined that the second hypothesis is more effective for a successful process. In which the transformational leadership style conducts the same performance as the second hypothesis.

Furthermore, the outcome from transformational leadership has correspondence with the *Team Management style* in the Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid (Blake and Mouton, 1964 and 1985) which was considered as the most effective leadership style to succeed. The team management style possesses the outcome of having 'high product and high people'. Identifying that, the leader succeeds to maintain having positive relationships with team members, as well as achieving best results in work. Transformational leadership provides a balance of relationship and production, which may enhance the achievement in management more equally and easily (Caroselli, 2000).

Transformational leadership allows the teamwork in early years be more unified and centralised by possessing the same value, target and motivation in the team. It may avoid conflicts and confusions in the work process (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). Beyond, during the conversion in practice, such as the change of curriculums, teaching methods, the alter in policies and procedures and so forth, the team can provide a better and faster support to those situations under this leadership style (Ebbeck and Waniganayake, 2003). Therefore, the care and learning provisions for children may be conducted at a higher standard.

An example of implementing transformational leadership in early years practice

A nursery manager wanted to renew the playground facilities for the older children. She informed the foundation phase leader and the toddlers' leader about the renew. Both of the leaders conveyed their ideas to the manager. They talked about the types of play facilities that will be age and stage appropriate for their group of children. They also provided ideas about what kind of facilities their group are interested at more from their daily observations and communications. Besides, the toddlers' leader also considered to order some play facilities that are suitable for some individuals that require special care. The manager noted all their suggestions and selected the new facilities on her own.

Although each of the leadership styles provides their own beneficial outcomes in team management, there are many arguments in which there is no such ‘best leadership style’ in management. Numerous theories and philosophies argue that leadership is best in shifting through each style according to its contextual nature (CIMA, 2001). This may include the consideration of situations, environments, time allowance, team members’ ability and personality, and the main purpose in the whole operation.

Above all, the *Fiedler’s Contingency Theory*, Fiedler (1967) convinced that neither task-oriented or relationship-oriented leader is the best. The application of leadership style should change according to situations. He claimed that the flexible use of leadership is the best application in management.

Besides, the *Beyond Theory Y* presented by Morse and Lorsch (1970) provides an insight that was developed based on the work of Theory X and Y. They considered that there should not be a fixed type of leadership. The success in leadership should be flexible according to consequences, situations and people. They defined that humans do not just fit in either the Theory X or Theory Y. As humans are unique, the leader should change the types of encouragements according to their personality and values. For instance, people with less motivation in work might need the application of Theory X, yet, people who are more knowledgeable might suits better with the Theory Y.

Moreover, the *Path-Goal Theory* initiated by House (1971) presents four types of leadership but highlighted that the flexibility within those styles is the key to successful leadership. House (1996) conveyed that the leader usually possesses the ability to remedy the defects of member's performances. But that only occurs when the members have much participation in the working process, together with maintaining communications with the leader, so then the leader is able to define the deficiency and provide supports towards it. In another point of view, the remedy that the leader provides can be the shifts in between types of leadership styles that are in accordance with members' performance.

In addition, the *Mckinsey 7s Model* (1980) presented the principles in leadership is the possesses of structure, system, style, staff, skills, strategy, and shared values. However, it is hard to have only one leadership completing all these principles. For instance, the democratic leadership style promotes the best in skills, staffs and strategy, the autocratic leadership promotes better in system and structure, in which the transformational leadership promotes the best in style, shared values as well as staffs. Consequently, in order to succeed in managing, the flexibility within different leadership styles are essential (Hayes, 2014).

And as a conclusion, although each leadership style can promote effective management in team works, a variety of studies have shown that having a flexible leadership style according to situations are the best in leadership.

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