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TASK 2

The lessons that I learned after the presentation was completed, are different but are all related to leadership and its theory. The first lesson that I learned while carrying out research for my part of the presentation, which included investigating one business leader from the 20th century who had a big impact on the business world, is that there are numerous leadership theories, with some of the most important ones being the Great Man Theory, Trait Theory and Style and Behaviour Theory. The Great Man Theory, first engineered in the 1800s asserted that great leaders are born, not made (Khan et al, 2016), onto which the Trait Theory expanded, stipulating that these natural-born leaders possessed various similar traits. Through my research for this task, I learned that although leaders might share some corresponding traits, they are not always born leaders, since that would require their families to also possess these qualities, which was mostly not the case for any of the leaders in our presentation. Because of this presentation, I learned that both 20th and 21st-century leaders fit in more with the Style and Behaviour Theories.

The second lesson that I learned is that although some leadership styles are more popular than others, they are not always the most appropriate ones for certain situations and that leaders might not always be relegated to having only one style. According to Goldsmith (2003), as paraphrased by Asrar-ul-Hag and Anwar (2018), effective leadership can be considered a fit between behaviour, context and need (Asrar-ul-Hag and Anwar, 2018), and the leader that I chose to present for this report is the perfect representation for this. For example, although Harold Geneen was considered an autocratic leader, this leadership style was very appropriate for the years during which he was operating as CEO of ITT and for the task he was looking to complete - to expand ITT. For example, according to Tichy and Ulrich (1984), as paraphrased by King (1990), “transformational leadership is essential during organizational transition by creating visions of potential opportunities and instilling employee commitment to change” (King, 1990: 49), which is why I considered my leader as having a mixture of styles. After further research, I also realised that this is very similar to what the Contingency Theory of leadership stipulates.

The third lesson that I learned during this project is that transformational leadership is seen as the style of leadership which leads to the best results, as it is a style which does not require leaders to have the best possible traits and qualities but, rather, it accepts that by setting a good example for others, taking responsibility for his role, rather than seeing it as a privilege and, earns trust, a leader can make the best choices for his company and employees in the world of business (Kumar et al, 2014).

Lastly, from my discussions with my presentation partners, I also learned that studying and defying leadership characteristics can be hard because although some specific traits and behaviours are prized above others, these opinions can be considered subjective, meaning that what one individual considered as an advantage might not always be an advantage for others. Geneen and Trump are perfect examples of this.

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