

Leadership and Management, Theory and Practice

Student name: Albena Yosifova-Stefanova

Student ID: 2014829

Module Title: Leadership and management, theory and practice.

Assignment Title: Assessment 1

Lecture`s name: Dr Mushfiqur Rahman

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Main body	3
Conclusion	8
References.....	9
Appendix.....	10

Introduction

This essay aims to critically reflect on my own experience of leadership in the context of Unilever, a UK-based multinational consumer goods company known for its commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. Specifically, I will focus on a situation where I was an active participant in a leadership role or witnessed leadership in action at Unilever. Drawing on relevant leadership theories and concepts, and will evaluate the leadership process and reflect on what the experience taught me about my leadership style and areas for development. Additionally, and also will provide an action plan outlining the specific objective, leadership activities, and target dates for achieving my development goals. This essay will begin by providing a brief overview of Unilever and leadership theory before delving into my personal experience and development plan.

Main body

Company Overview

Multinational consumer goods firm Unilever sells its products in more than 190 countries and has a significant presence in the UK. Lever Brothers, a British soap manufacturer, and Margarine Unie, a Dutch margarine factory, merged to form the business in 1929. Among the brands owned by Unilever include Dove, Axe, Ben & Jerry's, Lipton, and Hellmann's. Unilever is renowned for its dedication to social responsibility and sustainability. The corporation has set aggressive ambitions to lessen its environmental effect, including targets to reach zero trash to landfill by 2025 and halve its greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, Unilever has a Sustainable Living Plan that strives to enhance the standard of living for those working in its supply chain and encourage sustainable consumerism. Unilever has a decentralised structure that promotes regional and local autonomy in terms of leadership. Leadership that is accountable, imaginative, and collaborative is valued by the organisation. The programmes for developing leaders at Unilever strongly emphasise the value of emotional intelligence, diversity and inclusion, and moral judgement (Murphy and Murphy, 2018).

Leadership Theories and Models

Unilever and the leadership experience that needs to be considered can benefit from many leadership theories and approaches. Transformational leadership is one such theory, positive change is sparked within the organisation by transformational leaders who inspire and drive

their team members to reach their greatest potential. Given that Unilever places a strong emphasis on sustainability and social responsibility, this style of leadership is very pertinent to the corporation (Karagianni and Jude, 2018). Employees might be motivated by transformational leaders to be more inventive and come up with solutions for difficult issues, such as minimising the company's environmental impact. Servant leadership is another effective leadership style, servant leaders put the needs of their followers before their own and try to foster an environment that is encouraging and uplifting. This concept is in line with Unilever's focus on accountability and teamwork. Unilever can create a strong culture of trust and accountability by putting the needs of its stakeholders and workers first. Authentic leadership is a third pertinent theory, Self-aware, open, and sincere in their dealings with others, authentic leaders building credibility and trust with employees and stakeholders requires a certain type of leadership (Contreras, 2016). A firm like Unilever, which has a strong social and environmental goal, can benefit greatly from having authentic leaders because they foster a sense of meaning and purpose across the organisation. Finally, situational leadership is another relevant model for Unilever, situational leaders adapt their leadership style to the needs of their followers and the context in which they are operating. Given Unilever's decentralized structure and global reach, situational leadership can be particularly effective in helping leaders navigate complex and organisational contexts (Ayman and Lauritsen, 2018). Overall, the Unilever leadership development initiatives show a dedication to these and other leadership theories and models, placing a focus on the value of emotional intelligence, teamwork, and ethical decision-making. Unilever can continue to develop a leadership culture that emphasises sustainability, social responsibility, and innovation by putting these concepts into action (Uslu, 2019).

Application and Evaluation of Theories and Models

A worldwide manufacturer of consumer goods, Unilever offers a wide variety of commodities including food, personal care products, and home care products. The business places a high priority on sustainability and moral business conduct. An organisational structure that is decentralised and permits local decision-making characterises Unilever's leadership style. Leaders are better able to comprehend and respond to the needs of their local markets thanks to this decentralised strategy. Unilever can benefit from the situational leadership paradigm, which is founded on the notion that leadership philosophies should change depending on the circumstances (Guyadeen, and Seasons, 2018). According to this paradigm, effective leaders are those who can modify their leadership philosophies to suit the

demands of their followers. Due to Unilever's decentralised organisational structure, its executives can apply situational leadership by customising their management techniques to the demands of their regional markets. This strategy guarantees that the business is responsive to the needs of its stakeholders and customers. Another leadership approach that applies to Unilever is transformational leadership, a leader who inspires and motivates their people to accomplish shared objectives best describes this strategy. Visionary, transformational leaders can help their people see the broad picture by inspiring them to do the same. Transformational leadership is necessary given Unilever's emphasis on sustainability and moral corporate conduct. The leaders of the firm must encourage those who follow them to uphold these principles and strive to fulfil them (Anderson, 2017). The servant leadership approach, which emphasises the duty of the leader to serve their people, is another leadership strategy used by Unilever. Servant leaders are dedicated to assisting and fostering the growth of their followers, and they prioritise meeting those requirements. The company's dedication to meeting the requirements of its stakeholders is demonstrated by Unilever's focus on sustainability and moral business conduct. The needs of the company's customers, employees, and communities should be given priority by the company's management. The organisation has greatly benefited from Unilever's leadership approach, the corporation is positioned as a leader in corporate social responsibility due to its emphasis on sustainability and moral business practices (Coetzer, Bussin, and Geldenhuys, 2017). Moreover, Unilever's improved financial performance might be attributed to its dedication to sustainability. The sustainable living brands of the corporation outgrew the rest of the business by 69%, according to its 2020 annual report. The success of Unilever's leadership in promoting sustainable business practices is demonstrated by this growth.

Reflection of my own experiences

As a project manager in my previous role, I had the opportunity to lead a team of six members to develop new products for our company. During the project, I was responsible for managing the team, delegating tasks, setting deadlines, and ensuring that the project was completed within the allocated budget. Reflecting on my experience, I believe that, exhibited a transformational leadership style (Farrell, 2017). I was able to motivate my team members to work collaboratively towards the common goal of completing the project successfully. I encouraged creativity and innovation and provided my team members with the necessary resources and support to achieve their objectives. In addition, I used a situational leadership approach in response to the unique requirements and skills of each team member. For

instance, I gave the team members who were new to the organisation or had no prior expertise in the project domain more direction and supervision while granting those who were more knowledgeable and experienced with the project greater autonomy and freedom. But I also had to deal with managing team members' disagreements and resolving communication issues during the project. I came to the realisation that I could have handled these problems more skilful by implementing conflict resolution techniques and enhancing my communication abilities. My overall leadership experience has taught me that, depending on the circumstance and the people involved, effective leadership necessitates a blend of many leadership philosophies. Furthermore, it helped me to understand how crucial cooperation, communication, and dispute resolution are to getting results (White, Guthrie and Torres, 2019).

Area of development

Through my reflection on my own experience of leadership and the application of relevant theories and concepts, I have identified several areas for my development as a leader. Firstly, I am aware of the value of strong interpersonal and communication skills in leadership, there were multiple occasions in the scenario I thought about where a lack of communication resulted in misunderstandings and project delays. I must thus develop my communication abilities, particularly active listening, brief and clear speech, and the ability to modify my communication style to fit the needs of various people and circumstances (Durie and Beshir, 2016). Additionally, I should work to improve my capacity for effective and fruitful conflict management. Secondly, to finish activities within the allotted time range, I need to improve my time management skills. In the situation I thought about, there were times when I had to work quickly to finish chores because of bad time management, which affected the calibre of my work. I must therefore learn efficient time-management techniques, such as prioritising activities, breaking them down into manageable pieces, and delegating work as necessary (Trenkner, 2016). Thirdly, I need to strengthen my capacity for wise decision-making, in the scenario I considered, there were several times when I found it difficult to decide quickly and wisely, and I need to concentrate on creating an organised decision-making process that takes into account all pertinent considerations, assesses advantages and disadvantages, and considers possible outcomes of various courses of action. Last but not least, I need to become more flexible, especially in an emergency, such as the COVID-19 pandemic made clear the necessity for leaders to be adaptable and agile in the face of shifting conditions. I need to improve my capacity to recognise the effects of change, devise sensible plans of action, and

communicate effectively in such situations. Overall, in light of my own leadership experience, it is clear that I need to work on enhancing my interpersonal, communication, and time management skills as well as my decision-making and flexibility (Santagata, and Yeh, 2016).

Conclusion

It is concluded that the development of leadership has explored Unilever's leadership style as well as its implementation of numerous leadership theories and models, and also examined how Unilever's transformative leadership style has benefited the company and its stakeholders, furthermore, this gave a perspective on my personal leadership experience, emphasising the significance of good communication, empathy, and self-awareness in leadership. Through the analysis, I have learned that effective leadership requires a balance between task-oriented and people-oriented approaches. A leader must be able to inspire and motivate their team while also achieving the organization's goals. Additionally, I have realized the importance of continuous personal development in leadership and identified several areas for my development, such as improving my delegation and time management skills. The leadership development plan explains the particular tasks and timings that will aid in my development as a leader. By putting this plan into action, I hope to become a more successful and inspiring leader who can bring out the best in myself and my team.

References

1. Karagianni, D. and Jude Montgomery, A., (2018). Developing leadership skills among adolescents and young adults: a review of leadership programmes. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 23(1), pp.86-98.
2. Farrell, M., (2017). Leadership reflections: Leadership skills for knowledge management. *Journal of Library Administration*, 57(6), pp.674-682.
3. Murphy, P.E. and Murphy, C.E., (2018). Sustainable living: Unilever. *Progressive business models: Creating sustainable and pro-social enterprise*, pp.263-286.
4. Uslu, O., (2019). A general overview of leadership theories from a critical perspective.
5. Ayman, R. and Lauritsen, M., (2018). Contingencies, context, situation, and leadership.
6. Contreras, F., (2016). Servant and spiritual leadership theories: Are they two different notions? *Journal of Human Values*, 22(3), pp.202-208.
7. Guyadeen, D. and Seasons, M., (2018). Evaluation theory and practice: Comparing program evaluation and evaluation in planning. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 38(1), pp.98-110.
8. Anderson, M., (2017). Transformational leadership in education: A review of existing literature. *International Social Science Review*, 93(1), pp.1-13.
9. Coetzer, M.F., Bussin, M. and Geldenhuys, M., (2017). The functions of a servant leader. *Administrative Sciences*, 7(1), p.5.
10. Durie, A.D. and Beshir, E.S., (2016). Leadership effectiveness in higher education institutions: The IPA approach. *Arabian J Bus Management Review*, 6(5), p.243.
11. Trenkner, M., (2016). Implementation of lean leadership. *Management*, 20(2), pp.129-142.
12. Santagata, R. and Yeh, C., (2016). The role of perception, interpretation, and decision-making in the development of beginning teachers' competence. *ZDM*, 48, pp.153-165.
13. White, J.M.V., Guthrie, K.L. and Torres, M., (2019). *Thinking to transform: Reflection in leadership learning*. IAP.

Appendix

The development plan:

Objectives	Activities	Development Location	Target Date
Develop better communication skills	Attend communication workshops, read books on effective communication	College and online course	December 2023
Improve decision-making skills	Analyse past decisions, seek feedback from mentors, and read books on decision-making.	At the workplace, professional development courses	October 2023
To improve time management	Use a planner to prioritize tasks, Set realistic deadlines	At the workplace	June 2023
To be more adaptable to change	Take on new projects outside your comfort zone, Attend a change management seminar, Practice flexibility in your personal life	At the workplace and home	ongoing
Develop effective team management skills	Attend team management workshop, actively manage a team	At a workplace and take the online course	January 2024
Build strong relationships with team members	Engage in active listening, provide constructive feedback	At the workplace	February 2024