

LEADERSHIP: THEORY, PRINCIPLE AND STYLE

Lalan Dwibedi

Department of Management, TU, Thakur Ram Multiple, Campus Birgunj, Nepal
Email: dwivedylalan@gmail.com

Abstract

This article explains recent theoretical developments in the study of organizational leadership. It begins with a concise overview of the meaning and concept of leadership in terms of research, theory, and practice. This article suggests that success is certain if the application of the leadership styles, principles and methods is properly and fully applied in management because quality of leadership tradition offers great opportunity to refine further educational leadership and management policies and practices by accepting and utilizing the basic principles and styles of leadership.

Key words

Leadership; styles; principles; management; policies

Introduction

Leadership is a multidimensional phenomenon. It has been defined as, a behavior, a style, a skill, a process, a responsibility, an experience, a function of management, a position of authority, an influencing relationship, a characteristics and an ability. A leader is someone who has followers. It is widely accepted that leaders are not born, but made. In order to be a good leader, one must have the experience, knowledge, commitment, patience, and most importantly the skill to negotiate and work with others to achieve goals. Good leaders are thus made, not born. Good leadership is developed through a never ending process of self-study, education, training, and the accumulation of relevant experience (Bass

& Bass, 2008). According to Boulding (1956) in book *'The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society'*, outlined the general transdisciplinary theory of knowledge and human, social, and organizational behaviour. He stated that the basis of a good leadership is strong character and selfless devotion to an organization (Jenkins, 2013). From the perspective of employees, leadership is comprised of everything a leader does that affects the achievement of objectives and the well-being of employees and the organization (Abbasialiya, 2010). Trustworthiness is often key to positions of leadership as trust is fundamental to all manner of organized human groups, whether in education, business, the military, religion, government, or international organizations (Lamb &

McKee, 2004; Ivancevich, Konopaske, & Matteson, 2007).

Leadership involves a type of responsibility aimed at achieving particular ends by applying the available resources (human and material) and ensuring a cohesive and coherent organization in the process (Ololube, 2013). Northouse (2007) and Rowe (2007) described leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. This article contends that effective leadership is crucial to the proper operation and very survival of an organization.

Leadership is arguably one of the most observed, yet least understood phenomena on earth (Burns, in Abbasialiya, 2010). Over time, researchers have proposed many different styles of leadership as there is no particular style of leadership that can be considered universal. Despite the many diverse styles of leadership, a good or effective leader inspires, motivates, and directs activities to help achieve group or organizational goals. Conversely, an ineffective leader does not contribute to organizational progress and can, in fact, detract from organizational goal accomplishment. According to Naylor (1999), effective leadership is a product of the heart and an effective leader must be visionary, passionate, creative, flexible, inspiring, innovative, courageous, imaginative, experimental, and initiates change.

Theories of leadership

There are as many different views of leadership as there are characteristic that distinguish leaders from non-leaders. While most research today has shifted from traditional trait or personality-based theories to a situation theory which dictates that the situation in which leadership is exercised is determined by the leadership skills and characteristics of the leader (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009), all contemporary theories can fall under one of the following three perspectives: leadership as a process

or relationship, leadership as a combination of traits or personality-characteristics and leadership as certain behaviors as they are more commonly referred to leadership skills. In the more dominant theories of leadership, there exists the notion that leadership is a process that involves influence with a group of people toward the realization of goals (Wolinski, 2010).

Charry (2012) scholarly interest in leadership increased significantly during the early part of the twentieth century and identified eight major leadership theories. 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. Although new theories are emerging all of the time, most can be classified as one of Charry's major types:

Great man theory

Great man theories assume that the capacity for leadership is inherent, that great leaders are born not made. These theories often portray leaders as heroic, mythic and destined to rise to leadership when needed. The term great man was used because, at the time, leadership was thought of primarily as a male quality, especially military leadership (See also, Ololube, 2013)

Trait theory

Similar in some ways to great man theories, the trait theory assumes that people inherit certain qualities or traits make them better suited to leadership. Trait theories often identify particular personality or behavioral characteristics that are shared by leaders. Many have begun to ask of this theory, however, if particular traits are key features of leaders and leadership. How do we explain people who possess those qualities but are not leaders? Inconsistencies in the relationship between leadership traits and leadership effectiveness eventually led scholars to shift paradigms in search of new explanations for effective leadership.

Contingency theories

Contingency theories of leadership focus on particular variables related to the environment that might determine which style of leadership is best suited for a particular work situation. According to this theory, no single leadership style is appropriate in all situations. Success depends upon a number of variables, including leadership style, qualities of followers and situational features (Cherry, 2012/11). A contingency factor is thus any condition in any relevant environment to be considered when designing an organization or one of its elements (Naylor, 1999). Contingency theory states that effective leadership depends on the degree of fit between a leader's qualities and leadership style and that demanded by a specific situation (Lamb, 2013).

Situational theory

Situational theory proposes that leaders choose the best course of action based upon situational conditions or circumstances. Different styles of leadership may be more appropriate for different types of decision-making. For example, in a situation where the leader is expected to be the -most knowledgeable and experienced member of a group, an authoritarian style of leadership might be most appropriate. In other instances where group members are skilled experts and expect to be treated as such, a democratic style may be more effective.

Behavioral theory

Behavioral theories of leadership are based on the belief that great leaders are made, not born. This leadership theory focuses on the actions of leaders not on intellectual qualities or internal states. According to the behavioral theory, people can learn to become leaders through training and observation .Naylor (1999) notes that interest in the behavior of leaders has been stimulated by a systematic comparison of autocratic and democratic leadership styles. It has been observed that

groups under these types of leadership perform differently:

Autocratically led groups will work well so long as the leader is present. Group members; however tends to be unhappy with the leadership style and express hostility.

Democratically led groups do nearly as well as the autocratic group. Group members have more positive feelings, however, and no hostility. Most importantly, the efforts of group members continue even when the leader is absent.

Participative theory

Participative leadership theories suggest that the ideal leadership style is one that takes the input of others into account. Participative leaders encourage participation and contributions from group members and help group members to feel relevant and committed to the decision-making process. A manager who uses participative leadership, rather than making all the decisions, seeks to involve other people, thus improving commitment and increasing collaboration, which leads to better quality decisions and a more successful business (Lamb, 2013).

Transactional / Management theory

Transactional theories, also known as management theories, focus on the role of supervision, organization and group performance and the exchanges that take place between leaders and followers. These theories are based on leadership or a system of rewards and punishments (Cherry, 2042). In other words, on the notion that a leader's job is to create structures that make it abundantly clear what is expected of followers and the consequences (rewards and punishments) associated with meeting or not meeting expectations (Lamb, 2013). When employees are successful, they are rewarded and when they fail, they are reprimanded or punished (Cherry, 2012). Managerial or transactional theory is often likened to the concept and

practice of management and continues to be an extremely common component of many leadership models and organizational structures (Lamb, 2013).

Relationship /Transformational theory

Relationship theories, also known as transformational theories, focus on the connections formed between leaders and followers. In these theories, leadership is the process by which a person engages with others and is able to "create a connection" that result in increased motivation and morality in both followers and leaders. Relationship theories are often compared to charismatic leadership theories in which leaders with certain qualities, such as confidence, extroversion, and clearly stated values, are seen as best able to motivate followers (Lamb, 2013). Relationship or transformational leaders motivate and inspire people by helping group members. These leaders are focused on the performance of group members, but also on each person to fulfilling his or her potential. Leaders of this style often have high ethical and moral standards (Cherry, 2012).

Skills theory

This theory states that learned knowledge and acquired skills/abilities are significant factors in the practice of effective leadership. Skills theory by no means refuses to acknowledge the connection between inherited traits and the capacity to lead effectively, but argues that learned skills, a developed style, and acquired knowledge, are the real keys to leadership performance. A strong belief in skills theory often demands that considerable effort and resources be devoted to leadership training and development (Wolinski, 2010).

Principles of leadership

In addition to leadership theories, the principles of leadership are a commonly studied phenomenon. The United States Army

(1983) has identified eleven basic principles of leadership and the means for implementing them:

- ***Be technically proficient:*** As a leader, you must know your job and have a solid familiarity with the tasks of your different employees.
- ***Develop a sense of responsibility in your workers:*** Help to develop good character traits that will help them carry out their professional responsibilities;
- ***Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, and accomplished:*** Communication is key for the leaders. A leader must be able to communicate effectively. Leaders should spend most of their day engaged in communication. Older studies, in fact, noted that organizational leaders (managers) spent 70 to 90 per cent of their time each day on communication and related activities (Barrett, [n.d]);
- ***Keep your workers informed:*** Know how to communicate with not only junior staff, but senior staff and other key people as well;
- ***Know your people and look out for their well-being:*** Be well versed in basic human nature and recognize the importance of sincerely caring for your workers;
- ***Know yourself and seek self-improvement:*** In order to know yourself, you have to understand what you are, what you know, and what you can do (attributes). Seeking self- improvement means continually strengthening your attributes. This can be accomplished through self-study, formal education, workshops, reflection, and interacting with others;
- ***Make sound and timely decisions:*** Use good problem solving, decision making, and planning tools;

- **Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions:** Search for ways to guide your organization to new heights. When things go wrong, do not blame others. Analyze the situation, take corrective action, and move on to the next challenge;
- **Set the example:** Be a good role model for your employees. Employees must not only be told what is expected of them, but see leaders embodying organizational qualities and ethics. Leaders must embody what they wish to see in their employees.
- **Train as a team:** Do not focus on just your department, section, or employees but envision the whole organization as an entity that must learn and succeed together.
- **Use the full capabilities of your organization:** By developing a team spirit, you will be able to employ the abilities of your entire organization towards organizational goals.

Effective leadership is very essential to the organizational effectiveness and improvement. To sustain organizational leadership, leaders must develop sustainability on how they approach, commit to and protect, how they sustain themselves and followers around them to promote and support, how they are able and encouraged to sustain their vision and avoid burning out; and how they consider the impact of their leadership in organizational management. Most of the leaders want to do things that matter, to inspire others to do it with them and to leave a legacy once they have gone (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). To a large extent, it is not leaders who mismanage their organization; however, it is the systems in which they lead (Mulford, 2003). Questionably, sustainable leadership certainly needs to become a commitment of all organizational leaders. Therefore, to sustain effective leadership, Hargreaves and Fink (2004) presented seven

principles of sustainable leadership vis-à-vis;

- Sustainable leadership creates and preserves sustaining learning
- Sustainable leadership secures success over time
- Sustainable leadership sustains the leadership of others
- Sustainable leadership addresses issues of social justice
- Sustainable leadership develops rather than depletes human and material resources
- Sustainable leadership develops environmental diversity and capacity
- Sustainable leadership undertakes activist engagement with the environment

4. Leadership styles

Leadership styles are the approaches used to motivate followers. Leadership is not a "one size fits all" phenomenon. Leadership styles should be selected and adapted to fit organizations, situations, groups, and individuals. It is thus useful to possess a thorough understanding of the different styles as such knowledge increases the tools available to lead effectively. Below are a number of leadership styles articulated in the Toolkit;

Autocratic leadership style

Autocratic leadership is an extreme form of transactional leadership, where leaders have complete power over staff. Staff and team members have little opportunity to make suggestions, even if these are in the best interest of the team or organization. The benefit of autocratic leadership is that it is incredibly efficient. Decisions are made quickly and the work to implement those decisions can begin immediately. In terms of

disadvantages most staff resent being dealt with in this way- Autocratic leadership is often best used in crises situation, when decisions must be made quickly and without dissent.

Bureaucratic leadership style

Bureaucratic leaders follow rules rigorously and ensure that their staff also follows procedures precisely. This is an appropriate leadership style for work involving serious safety risks (such as working with machinery, with toxic substances, or at dangerous heights) or where large sums of money are involved. Bureaucratic leadership is also useful in organizations where employees do routine tasks (Shaefer, 2005). The drawback of this type of leadership is that it is ineffective in teams and organizations that rely on flexibility, creativity, or innovation (Santrock, 2007).

Charismatic leadership style

Charismatic leadership theory describes what to expect from both leaders and followers. Charismatic leadership is a leadership style that is identifiable but may be perceived with less tangibility than other leadership styles (Bell, 2013). Often called a transformational leadership style, charismatic leaders inspire eagerness in their teams and are energetic in motivating employees to move forward. The ensuing excitement and commitment from teams is an enormous asset to productivity and, goal achievement. The negative side of charismatic leadership is the amount of confidence placed in the leader rather than in employees. This can create the risk of a project or even in an entire organization collapsing if the leader leaves. Additionally, a charismatic leader may come to believe that s/he can do go wrong, even when others are warning him or her about the path s/he is on; feelings of invincibility can ruin a team or an organization.

Democratic/participative leadership style

Democratic leaders make the final decisions

but include team members in the decision-making process. They encourage creativity, and team members are often highly engaged in projects and decisions. There are many benefits of democratic leadership. Team members tend to have high job satisfaction and are productive because they are more involved. This style also helps develop employees' skills. Team members feel a part of something larger and meaningful and so are motivated to by more than just a financial reward. The danger of democratic leadership is that it can falter in situations where speed or efficiency is essential. During a crisis, for instance, a team can waste valuable time gathering input. Another potential danger is team members without the knowledge or expertise to provide high quality input.

Laissez-Faire leadership style

Laissez-faire leadership may be the best or the worst of leadership styles (Goodnight, 2011). 'Laissez-Faire' this French phrase for "let it be," when applied to leadership describes leaders who allow people to work on their own. Laissez-faire leaders abdicate responsibilities and avoid making decisions, they may give the team complete freedom to do their work and set their own deadlines. Laissez-faire leaders usually allow their subordinate the power to make decisions about their work. They provide teams with resources and advice, if needed, but otherwise do not get involved. This leadership style can be effective if the leader monitors performance and gives feedback to team members regularly. The main advantage of laissez-faire leadership is that allowing team members so much autonomy can lead to high job satisfaction and increased productivity. It can be damaging if team members do not manage their time well or do not have the knowledge, skills, or motivation to do their work effectively. This type of leadership can also occur when managers do not have sufficient control over their staff (Oloolube, 2013).

Transactional leadership style

This leadership style starts with the idea that team members agree to obey their leader when they accept a job. The transaction usually involves the organization paying team members in return for their effort and compliance. The leader has a right to punish team members if their work doesn't meet an appropriate standard. The minimalistic working relationships that result (between staff and managers or leaders) are based on this transaction (effort for pay).

Factors that determine leadership style

There are a number of factors that can help to determine which type of leadership style is most effective and when to draw on a different or combination of leadership styles. Listed below are a number of these factors as outlined by Ibara (2010, pp. 74-76):

Size of an institution/organization

Many organizations have the tendency to grow, and as they grow, to divide into sub-groups where the real decision making power lies. As institutions or organization grow, problems arise which may become more difficult to address at a macro or senior management level. At the same time, as institutions and organizations grow larger and become more multifaceted, there is a propensity for decision making to be centralized (Naylor, 1999). This situation leads to limited employee participation or no participation at all. Leaders may, if inclined, present ideas and invite input from employees (Ibara, 2010).

Degree of interaction/communication

Organizational interaction or communication in this paradigm refers to a relational approach between two or more individuals on the basis of social and organizational structures aimed at achieving goals (Ololube,

2012). Given that uncertainty surrounds many situations in organizations, leaders need to be involved with their staff. In this way, leaders can keep focused on key issues and ensure that organizational learning takes place. The quantity and quality of interaction in an organization tends to influence the style of organizational management with the main issue being that employees must work together in order to accomplish tasks. According to Naylor (1999), for organizations to be effective:

- Managers must constantly share information;
- Managers must have open channels of communication;
- There must be information of sufficient potential to demand regular attention from leaders at all levels;
- Interpretations of complex data/information should be done in face-to-face discussions with staff
- Managers must debate the nature of the data/information and the possible assumptions and actions that results from it (1999, p. 825).

Organizations can operate as open or closed systems. An open system receives information, which it uses to interact dynamically with its environment. Organizations are open systems. Openness increases the likelihood of better communication and in turn the functioning and survival of organizations (Ololube, 2012).

Personality of members

The personality attributes of employees and other managers/leaders can influence the leadership style of an organization. Some people tend to react more to certain styles of leadership than others. Individuals who like to depend on others generally do not like to participate in organizational affairs since their need for security and direction is better served by a rigid organizational structure. Those

with an understandable sense of direction wish to advance in their careers and enjoy participating in organizational decision-making processes tend to be more inclined towards open and collaborative leadership styles. Leaders should adapt to such situations by providing opportunities for participation to those who desire them and directing those who find it more difficult to participate in organizational decision-making (Ibara, 2010).

Goal congruency

The term goal congruence is applied to an organization that ensures that all its operations and activities support the achievement of its goals. Organizations with high goal congruence review their operations and activities to ensure that none of these limit or inhibit the ability to achieve organizational goals. In a Situation like this, there is a unity of direction as everybody (individuals, departments and divisions) is working towards the attainment of a common goal. Different leadership styles may be called for depending on the degree of existing goal congruence in an organization.

Level of decision making

Differentiating effective leaders from ineffective leaders is a major management concern. One means of differentiation may be the quality of decision making and that effective leaders make good decisions or choices that yield favorable outcomes for the organization. In addition to leadership ability, employee perception often plays a big role in the implementation and outcome of decisions (Weddle, 2013).

In a centralized organization, there is little or no provision for decisions or input from lower level staff. Directives are handed down and strict obedience is expected. Leadership in these organizations tends to be directive rather than participative or laissez-faire. Hence, the location of decision-making, which is the functional specialization of the organization,

determines, the style of leadership that is called for (Ibara, 2010).

Weddle (2013) identified five levels of decision making in organizations. With each level the amount of time and the decision making involvement increases:

- **Level one:** Leader makes the decision alone & announces the decision. This level requires little time and no staff involvement. This is particularly useful in crisis situations where immediate action is needed.
- **Level two:** Leader gathers input from individuals and makes the decision. The leader seeks input, usually to cover blind spots and enhance the depth of understanding of the issue at hand. Key individuals hold important information and not consulting is seen to be irresponsible.
- **Level three:** Leader gathers input from team and makes the decision. The leader holds a team meeting and solicits input from the team, listens to the team's ideas and then using that information, makes a decision.
- **Level four:** Consensus building. At this level, the leader is part of the team and he/she is just one vote/voice among many. The group processes all possible options and compromises until everyone is in agreement.
- **Level five:** Consensus and delegation with criteria/constraints. The leader delegates decision making to the team and is not a part of decision making discussions. This requires the leader to be very clear with the team as to the criteria/constraints-that must be met for their decision to be able to move forward. Failure to meet these criteria could result in the need for the team to reconsider their decision or the need for the leader to choose a default and/or use another level

(from above) for moving the decision forward.

Conclusion

This article concludes effective leadership in organizational management and a quality wake up call model that has applicability to the better performance in organization. It also concludes that success is certain if the application of the leadership styles, principles and methods is properly and fully applied in organization. Quality leadership tradition offers great opportunity to further refine leadership and management policies and practices by accepting and utilizing the basic principles and styles. Outstanding leadership principles and styles should be adopted as a means of enhancing effective management in organization.

Managers know that leadership requires a number of judgments each day that requires sensitivity and understanding of various leadership strategies. Thus, bridging the gap between theory and practice should provide exploration of dominant leadership strategies to give leaders a solid basis in theory and practical application. Leaders are encouraged to discover the most appropriate leadership of a combination of strategies that will best enable to achieve their results.

References

- Abbasialiya, A. (2010). *The Concept of Leadership*. Retrieved January 11, 2013. from <http://expertscolumn.com/content/concept-leadership>.
- Avolio, B.J. Walumbwa. F.O. & Weber, T. J. (2009). *Leadership; Current Theories, Research and Future Directions*. Annual Review of Psychology 60 (2009). pp. 421-449. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163621.
- Barrett, D.J. (n.d). *Leadership Communication: A Communication approach for Senior-Level Managers*. Retrieved March 19, 2014, from <http://scholarship.rice.edu/bitstream,liandle/1911/21,037/Leadership/2OCommunicationO/o2O-`/`20A~/`20Comn--.urlication/'2OApproach%/'-Gfor'/'20Senior-Level'/o2OManagers'/'2O-'/o2OBarrett.pdf>
- Bass, B., Bass, R. (2008). *The Bass Handbook of Leadership; Theory, Research and Managerial Application*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Bell, R. M. (2013). *Charismatic Leadership Case Study with Ronald Reagan as Exemplar*. *Emerging Leadership Journeys*, 60), 66-74.
- Boulding, K. (1956). *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society*. Ann Arbor, ME University of Michigan Press.
- Charry, K. (2012). *Leadership Theories-8 Major Leadership Theories*. Retrieved March 23, 2014 from <http://psychology.about.com/od/leadership/p/leadership-theories.html>
- Cherry, K. (2011). *What is a theory?* Retrieved March 19, 2014 from <http://psychology.about.com/od/tindex/f/theory.htm>
- Goodnight. R. (2011). *Laissez-Faire Leadership*. *Encyclopedia of Leadership*. London- UK: Sage publications.
- Hargreaves. A. & Fink. D. (2004). *The Seven Principles of Sustainable Leadership*. *Educational Leadership*, 61(7). 1-12.
- Hargreaves. A.. & Goodson. 1. (2006). *Educational Change Over Time? The Sustainability and Nonsustainability of Three Decades of Secondary School Change and Continuity*. Educational

- Administration Quarterly 42(1). 3-41. doi: 10.1177/0013161X05277975.
- Ibara, E. C. (2010). *Perspectives in Educational Administration*. Port Harcourt. Nigeria: Rodi Printing and Publishing.
- Jenkins, T. (2013). *Reflections on Kenneth E. Boulding's The Image; Glimpsing the Roots of Peace Education Pedagogy*. Journal of Peace Education and Social Justice, 7(1)- 27-37.
- Ivancevich, J.; Konopaske, R. & Matteson M. (2007). *Organization Behaviour and Management*. New York:- McGraw-Hill Irwin.
- Lamb. L. F. & McKee. K.B. (2004). *Applied Public Relations; Cases in Stakeholder Management*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Routledge.
- Lamb, R. (2013). *How can Managers Use Participative Leadership Effectively?*. Retrieved March 17, 2014, from <http://v~.v~.v.task.fm/pai-ticipative-leadership;r>.
- Mulford, B. (2003). *School Leaders; Changing Roles and Impact on Teacher and School Effectiveness*. A paper commissioned by the Education and Training Policy Division, OECD, for the Activity Attracting, Developing and training Effective Teachers. April 2003.
- Naylor, J. (1999). *Management*. Harlow. England: Prentice Hall.
- Northouse, G. (2007). *Leadership Theory and Practice (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oak: Sage Publications.
- Oloolube. N. P. (2013). *Educational Management, Planning and Supervision; Model for Effective Implementation*. NP Oloolube. Owerri, Nigeria: Spring Field Publishers, 2013. 29, 2013. A Critical Assessment of the Role/Importance of Non-formal Education to Human and National Development in Nigeria: Future Trends. NP Oloolube, DE Egbazor.
- Rowe, W. G. (2007). *Cases in leadership*. Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage Publications.
- Santrock, J. W. (2007). *A Topical Approach to Life-Span Development*. New York. NY: McGraw-Hill
- Schaefer. R. T. (2005). *Sociology, (9th Ed)*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Weddle, J. (2013). *Levels of Decision Making in the Work-place*. Retrieved March 13, 2014 from <http://v;wNv.jobdig.com/articies/1115~/Levels-of Decision Making-in-the-Work-place.html>.
- Wolinski, S. (2010). *Leadership Theories*. Retrieved June 14, 2014, from <http://managementhelp.org/blogs/leadership-/2010/04/21/leadership-theories/>.