Leadership Theories and Models from the Perspective of Western Scholars


ABSTRACT

In this era of world without borders, mankind needs leadership with authority to discharge the responsibility of shaping a civilized and competitive society. This article discusses leadership generally. Two leadership theories are the subject of this study, including leadership principles which encompass the followers, the head, communication and situation. And three types of leadership are discussed in this article, which are top-down leadership model, transformation model and functional leadership model based on a military leadership model. This article finds that a leader needs to have skills such as conceptual skills, specific technical skills and communication skills vis-avis workers.

Keywords: Leadership, concept, theories, models, western scholars.

Introduction

According to Rosen Bach and Taylor (1993), leadership is a process of getting individuals to co-operate for the success of something which would not be possible without the leader’s influence. And Lussier and Achua (2007) states that leadership is a process of mutual influence between a leader and his followers to achieve organisational objectives through making changes. Meanwhile, Coffey, Cook and Hunsaker (1994) state that leadership is the capacity to inspire confidence and support among individuals to achieve organisational goals.

Leadership is a process of influencing human behaviour or conduct relating to the tasks or work of followers in achieving organisational goals and objectives. Leaders may use their position to influence followers by becoming the inspiration of the staff for a higher level of teamwork. Outstanding leaders are not born but if a leader has a high determination and desire, he can be an effective and successful leader in his group. Leadership qualities need to be learnt through research, education, training and experience as guidance to help a leader to be more outstanding.

The learning process of a leader never ends because he needs to learn from past experience in giving staff the inspiration to work as a team in striving towards a higher level of performance. A leader has to be clear on what needs to be done to enable him to give proper instructions to lower staff or team-workers. A good leader...
constantly learns to improve his leadership skills and never rests with the success attained, but makes it a success the guide to reap future successes.

Even though a leader’s position as manager, supervisor and so on gives him wide powers to carry out his task and achieve certain objectives in an organisation, this power only makes him the boss and not a leader. Leadership may differ but the appropriate leadership can make staff want to achieve higher goals and not just to please the boss or pretend to. A leader may carry out a leadership process by utilising his leadership qualities such as trust or confidence, character, ethical values, knowledge as well as past experience.

Leadership Theories:

Bass Theory:

According to the Bass (1990) theory, there are three basic ways of how a person becomes a leader. These are the Trait theory, Great Event theory and Transformation theory:
1) The Trait theory: The personality of a person may enable him to be a natural leader.
2) Great Event theory: When an important crisis or event occurs and causes the performance of someone to be enhanced, leading to exceptional leadership characteristics.
3) Transformational Leadership theory: This is the most widely accepted theory according to which anyone can choose to be a leader and can learn the skills to be an effective leader.

Robbins Theory:

Robbins (1996) is of the opinion that leadership is the ability to influence a group towards achieving organisational purpose and goals. There are three main theories in the development of leadership theories:
1) The Trait theory: A leader is born with the natural traits, not made or created. This approach is based on the ability to scientifically direct, desire to lead, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, intelligence and extensive knowledge about the work. However, there are shortcomings in this theory. It has no clear and accurate answers on the specific traits actually required and is unable to continuously portray an effective leadership.
2) The Behaviour theory: Unlike the Trait theory, the Behaviour theory states that a leader can be created and it is possible to learn to be a leader. The shortcomings of the trait theory becomes the basis for the behaviour theory which states that leadership is assessed from actions or behaviour shown by a leader and not from his traits. Further examination of this theory conducted by the Universities of Ohio and Michigan in the year 1926, resulted in two types of leadership based on behaviour:
   i) Worker-oriented leadership (Consideration) stresses on leader-worker relationship.
   ii) Task-oriented leadership (Initiating Structure) stresses on task in achieving organisational goals.
In addition, University of Iowa submits three approaches which can explain this theory as follows:
   i) Democratic: leadership by democratic means and frequently involving workers.
   ii) Autocratic: leadership by giving orders and directives to workers.
   iii) Laissez-Faire Style: leadership by giving freedom to workers while leaders do not particularly care about worker activity (no leadership).

Blake, Shepard and Mouton (1964) expanded this leadership model by using the flexibility factor. However, the shortcoming of this theory is that it does not take into account the situation or work environment factor because not all styles of leadership can be applied to a particular situation.
3) The Situational theory. This theory exists to relate trait or even behaviour to the work situation, whereby leadership depends on the compatibility between personality, task, authority, attitude and perception. This approach is considered the most ideal and suitable in explaining the relation between head, worker and situation. According to Horner (1997), the situational theory represents a type of leadership which depends on the factors of leader, follower and work situation. The leader should be able to change leadership styles promptly and accurately to suit a given work situation. Fiedler (1967) presents a contingency theory which is one of the situational approach theory, whereby it states that an effective leadership can be achieved if there is a shared vision between the leadership and workers under him as well as the extent the leader is able to manage the situation. The following are three types of contingency leadership models:
   i) Leader-Member Relation is the relation between the leader and workers under him based on trust and mutual respect.
   ii) Task Structure is based on the formality rate, procedure and task structure given by the leader.
   iii) Position Authority is based on the situation such as worker acceptance and termination, discipline, promotion and income improvement.

Vroom-Yetton theory explains how a leader should lead his workers in different situations by using various types of leaderships because there is no single effective style which can be applied to all situations (Vroom, 1973). Meanwhile, Path-Goal theory states that a leader should help workers in achieving their purpose and
goals by providing the path required to ensure their goals are generally in tandem with organisational goals (House, 1974). The Path-goal theory explains 4 types of leader behaviour:

i) Directive Leadership: the leader gives directions on what to do and the manner of doing it, schedules work according to quality standards, guides and specifically instructs on the way to complete tasks. These are included in the aspects of planning, organising, coordinating and monitoring as well as explaining the task of a leader.

ii) Supportive Leadership: the leader is approachable, shows concern for workers and is fair between co-workers. In addition, the leader is helpful in solving workers’ problems in keeping good interpersonal relations between groups of workers.

iii) Participative Leadership: the leader discusses with workers and uses shared ideas in making decisions. This type of leadership increases workers’ motivation because they feel that they are contributing ideas to achieve organisational goals.

iv) Achievement-Oriented Leadership: the leader sets the level of achievement and tells the workers what they have to achieve and to maintain performance as well as to increase efforts to achieve the maximum possible.

However, there are shortcomings to the situational theory as it does not explain the concept itself and is unable to state whether a worker is required to change his behaviour as the leader does to suit the changing work situation.

Hay’s Study:

In a study by Hay, there are more than 75 main components of worker satisfaction. However, there are two essential keys to effective leadership:

1) It is believed that high trust and confidence in a leader give worker satisfaction in an organisation.

2) Effective communication by a leader in three critical areas is the key to gaining organisational trust and confidence:

i) Helping workers understand the overall business strategy of the company.

ii) Helping workers understand the ways they can contribute in achieving business objectives.

iii) Sharing information with workers and the best possible way of carrying out a task by reference to the strategic business objective.

Leadership Principle:

Followers:

Each follower responds to a different leadership style because each one behaves differently. A less motivated person requires a different approach from a highly motivated person. Every leader needs to know the behaviour of his workers and use a different approach for each worker. Basically, a leader needs to have an understanding of human nature such as their needs, emotions and suitable motivation.

Head:

A leader has to have an honest understanding of himself, of who he is, what he knows and what he can do. In addition, a leader has to remember that it is followers who determine whether a leader is effective or not. If a leader is unreliable and followers lack confidence in him, then the followers will not be motivated to do their job. Hence, to excel as a leader, he must inculcate honesty in himself and convince the workers to carry out their tasks.

Communication:

Two-way communication is the most effective communication in a person’s leadership style. However, much of existing communication is no more oral. The leader is an example for the followers. What and how a leader communicates will determine whether it will strengthen or break off relations between a leader and his workers.

Situation:

Each person is different, what a leader does in a given situation will not always be the same in another situation. A leader has to use proper consideration in deciding the best action and the most effective leadership style for every situation. A leader may have used an unsuitable leadership style with a particular worker and if this results in conspiracy, then he has to act quickly to control the situation to ensure that his followers remain on the right track according to organisational goals.
Leadership Models:

**Top-Down Leadership Model:**

This model is pyramid-shaped and points to the direction of power flow from up to down, that is, from the highest authority to the workers below. It clearly shows the flow of directives and authority from top management to the middle, down to the implementer of directives. In this situation, the directives come from only one source and workers execute them quite unquestioningly. This model can be seen in organisation charts which have a clear hierarchy in the organisation, particularly in government organisational charts. In an organisation, the head is the most powerful person, for example, in a university administration, the Vice-Chancellor is the highest authority, followed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and so on.

The shortcoming of this model is that all directives which need implementation must go through various levels, whereby the process of directives from top management to the workers who implement them, must pass via many layers of management, which is time-consuming. The descent of directives from one layer to another layer not only takes time, it may also cause the directives to become flawed and incomplete. This model is more bureaucratic in nature with much red tape to reach a decision. In a large organisation, the process of decision-making involves many components which can cause ‘time-tag/lag’ in information flow from one level to another until it reaches the implementer.

Bureaucratic leadership is not very good, but it is still used in many government organisations. The advantage of this leadership pattern is that it does not bend to personal problems, has clearly-set tasks and functions and avoids wastage due to change in top leadership. The implementers of directives do not usually question top management directives because they regard the directives as coming from policy-makers which must be implemented. However, the effectiveness of directives is difficult to monitor by top management because in a bureaucracy exist many levels of management, particularly in a big organisation. If a particular directive needs a certain interpretation, it is possible that various versions of implementation will occur causing the objectives or goals to be missed.

Generally, this model resembles autocratic leadership because a directive given comes from top to down, one-way and no questions asked. Views and opinions are only from the top management and policy-makers, similar to an autocratic administration. For example, in the education system of Malaysia, the Ministry of Education directed schools to implement teaching of Science and Mathematics in English language. Even though this was opposed by many parties, schools are as if forced to do so by policy-makers. Nevertheless, this model is very suitable in new and immature organisations probably because the staff is still new, less knowledgeable and less experienced in the situation and thus need to be directed by top management.

**Transformation Model:**

According to J.M. Burns (1978), transformational leadership is one based on transaction or exchange between the leader and the worker. This exchange is based on discussion between the leader and related parties to determine the consideration or reward for the worker if he meets or achieves the conditions set by the leader.

Transformational leadership involves dramatic changes in an organisation such as creating and implementing a vision, responsibility to make workers or followers aware of the organisational norms and values and giving space to and encouraging changes, internal and external. Seven characteristics possessed by transformational leaders are: considering himself as an agent of change, courageous, trusting in others, mobilizers of values, life-long learners, having the capacity to face difficulty and uncertainty, and creating a vision (Tichy and Devanna, 1986).

The pattern of leader-worker relationship in transformational leadership is as follows:

1. The leader knows the wishes of workers and makes efforts to explain to them that their wishes will be realized if they fulfill their work goals.
2. The leader gives a suitable reward or remuneration in exchange for workers’ efforts.
3. The leader responds to workers’ personal interest as long as they are parallel with the work input value (Robbins, 1996).

So it was with the development of transformational leadership, which was introduced by J.M. Burns in the year 1978. These views reflect that transformational leadership requires very exceptional leadership capacity, whereby the leader is able to raise the awareness of followers towards realizing changes for the organisational interest, in addition to helping them explore and rise above their personal interest. It can be concluded that there are 4 main characteristics in transformational leadership:

1. Idealized Influence: Idealized influence is behaviour which results in a high standard of behaviour, provides vision and awareness of it, shows confidence, gives rise to respect, builds commitment, leads to better work performance and increases worker morale. Among the behaviour of a leader who has the idealisation influence is increasing worker confidence in top management, making worker strive to copy the
behaviour of and identifying with himself, inspiring worker to accept shared values, norms and principles, developing a shared vision, inspiring worker to maintain a consistent level of behaviour, developing an organisational culture and ideology parallel with society and showing a sense of social responsibility.

2) Inspirational Motivation: Inspirational motivation refers to a highly motivated attitude in the leader which in turn makes workers motivated. Bass (1985) states that a leader who is motivated will show behaviour which will arouse a worker to achieve the best performance in his career development, inspires and guides his worker to achieve a better future, works hard to achieve targets, works optimally, directs potential as a whole and encourages worker to work more than usual.

3) Individualized Consideration: Individualized consideration is listening and paying attention to worker’s problems, giving support and encouragement to worker’s efforts and performance in career development. A leader provides specific attention to individual worker problems in his achievements and development as his trainer or mentor. A leader also shows appreciation for each improvement in worker performance. This attitude enhances worker potential and influences job satisfaction and productivity.

4) Intellectual Stimulation: Intellectual stimulation refers to the process of increasing understanding in the stimulation of new ideas for dealing with problems, thinking, imagining and setting belief values. It also relates to logic, analysis, rationale and using an approach acceptable to workers. By this method, a leader may stimulate the growth of innovation and creativity in problem-solving.

A transformational leader has exceptional ability in giving speeches, persuasion and high conceptual and technical skills such that workers will make a leader their model example to emulate and they are willing to defend him if he is threatened. In the transformational leadership concept, workers need to play their role in being willing to make changes when requested and to be confident in the benefit of such changes for them and the organisation as a whole. In addition, other skills required of a leader are making anticipations, persuasion and comparison, understanding value changes as well as the ability to understand the needs and wishes of workers.

Leadership Functional Model:

The Functional Leadership Model is not only suitable for use in business, it may also be applied in school and educational organisations. This model was introduced by John Adair based on a Military Leadership Model. Field Marshall William Slim had introduced the Military Leadership Model because he believed that it could be implemented in the business world. He asserted in his book Defeat into Victory, that the spirit is an important source of energy to achieve success, whereby spiritual strength gives rise to mental, intellectual and material strength.

John Adair states that that the effectiveness of a person’s leadership is measured in terms of discharging of responsibilities by the leader and workers, developing a cohesive work-team, and building individual strength in an organisation. The management functions such as planning, initiating, controlling, supporting, informing and evaluating progress are very important in achieving leadership effectiveness. This model is also based on the Action-Centred Leadership concept, which is widely developed and publicly accepted. Among the studies which use this model are those by William (1998), Mat (2003) and Mohd Yusof (1994).

Leadership Skills:

Conceptual Skills:

A leader needs to have the ability to analyse, think logically and be creative in giving ideas and opinions as well as solving problems.

Technical Skills:

Technical skills are related to methods, procedures and techniques related to specific instruments used in carrying out tasks and activities.

Communication Skills:

An effective leader requires communication skills vis-a-vis workers under him. Communication skills are closely linked to other people, particularly with their feelings and attitude. In addition, a leader needs to clearly and effectively convey instructions regarding tasks to his workers.
Conclusion:

Leadership is a process whereby a leader influences workers under him to follow in executing tasks willingly to achieve organisational goals. Leadership is closely linked to the rise and fall of an organisation. In addition, a person’s leadership determines worker performance and job satisfaction. Organisational effectiveness and efficiency are also dependant on the way a leader leads his workers in carrying out the company’s mission.

Each leader must have followers. His success or otherwise in influencing his followers depends on his way of using his intelligence in applying suitable leadership theories and models in different situations. A leader must be able to influence and motivate his followers. An effective leadership is leadership which may bring changes in an organisation and the behaviour of workers.

It is not easy to be a leader who can really influence his subordinates to be loyal followers. A leader requires mastery of certain skills and behaviour styles to suit circumsatnces. Thus, a leader needs to always learn how to be a better leader because leadership has to be learnt from knowledge and experience.

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