



A Review of Leadership: Different Leadership Theories and Styles Relevant to Education Leadership

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. All authors contributed in designing the study. Author PP wrote the protocol and the first draft of the manuscript. All Authors managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This academic investigation on education leadership theories and styles sought to investigate the effect of different leadership styles practicing in educational organizations and their impact on overall performance of the organization. A summarized overview of the meaning of leadership is followed by an elaborated enquiry on different leadership theories and styles. This study followed a qualitative research approaches where secondary research data from previously published research articles will be integrated and interpreted. This article validates that identification and application of proper leadership theory and style is crucial in educational organization success. Knowledge on range of effective leadership approach offers the prospect to further refine the existing school leadership by accepting and employing the basic principles and styles of those. Based on the available reliable literature, this theoretical study concludes that understanding the most suitable leadership style or the combination of leadership styles is crucial in achieving common goal attainment which is ultimately result in organizational/ school overall success.

Keywords: Leadership; education leadership; leadership theories; leadership styles.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is said, leaders are not born but are made, yet it depends on the context [1]. However, it is undoubtedly accepted that a 'good leadership' requires a blend of commitment, experience, knowledge, aptitude, negotiation and decision taking ability and teamwork towards achieving common goals. Thus, leadership qualities are developed through constant education, training and gathering experience (Goleman, 2004). As quoted by Neyişci & Potas, [2], in the book "The image: Knowledge in Life and Society" by Boulding (1956) highlights that a foundation of a good leadership involves a strong personality and selfless devotion to the organizational goal achievement. From employees' perspective, leadership encompasses every action taken by a leader towards the organizational development while assuring employee's well-being [3]. Despite its application, leadership strongly entangles human factors and social factors, hence fidelity plays a key role [4]. In its essence, leadership as a process of driving and motivating a group of individuals towards achieving common goals [5]. The concept of leadership is a well-researched, much debated and deliberated, but yet least understood and ever evolving topic [6,7]. Leadership and its different associated styles have an immense impact on how the employees are motivated, and their performance levels are elevated in achieving the organizational goals. Nonetheless, leadership is multi-faceted; it is hard to substantiate a particular leadership style as universal. Leaders have a great influence on decision-making and goal setting process of an organization [8]. It is considered as the essential and the most powerful tool in gauging organizational culture and efficacy [9,5]. Leadership is a 'technique' of influencing people in an organization in attaining the organizational goals. Appropriate leadership approach in an organization can evoke a conducive working climate that manipulate and guide the follower's attitudes, motivation, engagement and behaviours [10]. This conceptual research presents a modest analytical detail of theoretical research conducted on the current discourse of different educational leadership theories and styles in the last decade with special reference to their relationship and impact on education sector as an organizational performance indicator. However, as Neyişci & Potas, [2] notes, leadership in the disciplines of management, business and marketing has been extensively researched. But the existing literature reveals a perplexing phenomenon, that the notion and

effect of the leadership in Education related disciplines are comparatively inadequately researched; yet the different theories that are conceptualized through numerous empirical and theoretical research can be well adapted to the sophistication of the education leadership.

2. THEORIES OF EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

There are many characters and factors that distinguishes leaders from non-leaders. There is an array of different leadership theories, but today in general, all these theories have shifted its base from individual base (which is mainly dependent on the personality) towards a contextually sensitive phenomenon where success and relevance of the leadership exercised is determined by effective response by the leaders [11]. In a broader sense, all these contemporary theories can be categorized under three main parameters, namely; processers, personality and skills [12]. However, many studies have identified 'leadership' as a theoretical process that influence a group of people/ followers towards a common objective [13]. Although at the beginning of 20th century, leadership theories are necessarily used to distinguished leaders from non-leaders, yet lately these theories have been progress in to defining leader's skills rather than personality [14]. There are several types of theories identified in the leadership literature [15,16].

2.1 The 'Great Man' Theory

This is the most popular leadership theory in the 19th century, upholds the notion that leaders are born, not made, where character is placed as the centre of the leadership theory [17]. 'Great Man theory' assumes that the leadership capacity is inherited, rather than acquired [18]. Spector [17] quotes Thomas Carlyle, a historian and a leadership theorist, who states 'effective leaders are the people who are gifted with divine inspiration and apposite leadership characterizes by birth' (p.8). Further, Madanchian et al., [19] also recognizes Great Man theory relies on the genetically inherited higher abilities of an individual that distinguishes him from his followers.

2.2 Trait Theory

This approach has many similarities with the Great Man theory of leadership, mainly focusing

on diverse characteristics which leaders might be committed to [20]. These traits and qualities illustrate an individual as a great leader [21]. Yet these characters too are meant to distinguish leaders from followers. The trait theory explains that some peoples are born with special characters that highlights them as leaders [20] again, accepting that leadership is inherited. Different traits such as decision-making ability, self- confidence, self- control, stress-management, situation- handling, and results-orientedness were considered as effective leadership qualities under this theory [11]. However, there are instances, where although these traits or these characteristic features exists in an individual, yet they are not recognized as leaders. These inconsistencies between traits and leaderships, shifts the theoretical leadership paradigm towards more coherent leadership theories [22].

2.3 Contingency Leadership Theory

This leadership theory necessarily relies on that pre-determine contextually variables relevant to the environment that determines the most suitable leadership approach [23]. Hence, this theory accepts that there is no single, universal leadership theory that could be applied for every situation. Rather, it is a situational factor [14]. When deciding the leadership paradigm for a particular environment, situational conditions should be considered. Yukl [21] further justifies Contingency Theory as a combination of effective leadership qualities and leadership styles that a particular situation demands. This new development in the leadership theory suggests that the leadership is not totally inborn; rather, it is a function or a reaction to a certain situation [23].

2.4 Behavioural Leadership Theory

Behavioural theory on leadership essentially argues that 'leaders are made and not born', which opposes the conventional leadership theories which believes leadership qualities are inborn [24]. This theory recognizes the actions of a leader over inherited intellectual qualities. This is one of the modern theories of leadership [15]. This theory accepts that leadership qualities can be learned, not necessarily inherited; rather a leader can be created based on the learnable behavioural characters [25]. Collaborative decision-making, team building and supporting each other to align individual goals and ambitions to achieve collective goals are crucial factors in behavioural leadership scenario [26].

2.5 Participative Leadership Theory

Participative leadership theory denotes an ideal situation where the leaders turn to the team's inputs, suggestions, observations and ideas in decision-making process [27]. Participative leaders encourage their team to feel relevant and inclusive by recognizing the team's skills and abilities leading to making decisions, benefitted by all [28]. In participative leadership, leaders maintain a healthy rapport with the followers in aiming at achieving the common goals; peers are boosted morally and valued through active participation rather than passive contribution [14]. This is also a type of democratic leadership approach. As per this theory, although the leaders entertain the inputs and participation of the team members in the decision-making process, ultimate decision-making responsibility lies on the leader.

3. LEADERSHIP STYLES

Leadership style is the explicit and implicit actions performed and approaches practiced by a leader to guide, motivate and to implement a plan in an organization [26]. It is obvious that there is no 'one size fits for all' leadership approach. Instead, leadership styles or the approaches evidently depends on many situational and contextual factors including, organizational culture, peers, environment, goals, etc. [29]. Especially in an Educational background leadership style should be absolutely flexible, updated and timely; because education leaders are expected to be 'change agents' and always leading a group of intellectuals towards an investment of knowledge. Prevailing scholarly literature identifies several leadership styles, and it is an area which is continuously evolving, expanding its horizon. Turner & Baker [16] states that modern leadership theories and models assess the leaders based on the satisfaction and performances of the followers. However, the literature agrees that leadership styles are highly situation bound – some styles have to adapt to the situation, whereas some styles can be used in any situation. Administrators apply different leadership styles based on the situation and the nature of the followers.

3.1 Transactional Leadership

The characteristic of this type of leadership approach is that it is based on 'exchange'. Exchange of the promises and rewards (e.g.

recognition, pay increase, advance payments. Etc) for good employees and threats and disciplinary actions for the poor performing employees features the transactional leadership within an organization [27]. Leaders following this approach does not envision the change of the future/ forward-thinking-ideas, rather they are looking to continue the existing process going on [30]. However, within the Maslow's hierarchy of needs, transactional leadership approach placed at the basic level of need satisfaction [31]. Transactional leadership preliminary is passive, Transactional leadership being applied to the lower need satisfaction and tends to think out of the box only when solving problems. It is authoritative and managerial in nature, yet it lays the foundation for higher level leadership style which is applied to higher level need satisfaction such as transformational leadership. In general, as Howell & Avolio [31] states, transactional leadership focuses on clarification of requirements to achieve a specific task and the specification of contingent rewards. Further, Judge and Piccolo [32] have also discussed on the qualities, positive features and negative features and the impact of transactional leadership on organizational human capital as well as organizational performances in detail.

3.2 Transformational Leadership

Organizational leadership which sprouts from organizational learning is an importance determinant of sustained performances and survival of an organization [33]. Transformational leadership is a specialized approach that has been evolved in order to influence and increase the motivation of followers [32]. It is considered as a mean of fostering the employee engagement towards collaborative effort within an organization [30]. This leadership style also encourages the followers to overcome the self-interests and also to reduce the factionalism within an organization through enduring organizational values and goals [33]. This in turn enhances the motivation of the followers to contribute more towards goal achievement. Transformational leaders have been seen as a powerful figure that can drive a group of people towards common purpose. As per Den Hartog et al., [34], there are 04 prominent characteristics of a transformational leader, namely; 1. charismatic (displaying convictions that stand out the organizational objective and as a role model for the followers) 2. Inspirational / motivation (articulates a vision that appeals to the followers about the organizational goals) 3. Intellectual stimulation (degree of which

the leader challenges the assumptions, stimulates and encourages the follower's creativity) 4. personal and individual attention (level of involvement in individual follower's needs towards their self-fulfillment and inspiration). Hence, as shown by previous studies, transformation leadership has a positive enforcement on employee satisfaction and performances as well [27].

3.3 Delegative Leadership

This is also known as laissez-faire leadership style, where the followers are given enough freedom to make necessary decisions. This leadership style implies that the leader does not involve in a meaningful transaction with the followers in the context of decision-making or taking responsibility or accountability toward organizational outcome. Hence, this style in-fact indicates the absence of leadership [34]. This type of leadership does little or nothing that impacts either the followers or their performance levels. This type of leadership is specifically effective when the followers of that particular organization are highly skilled, motivated, intuitive and are capable of initiating and working of their own [26]. As the conventional term used for this type of leadership 'laissez-faire' implies a complete hands-off approach, today's organizations are open-minded enough to consult and get the feedback of its employees when and where it's necessary, in decision-making as well as during organizational operations. On the other hand, delegative leadership is not the ideal type of leadership approach when the followers are not well versed or lacks the knowledge or experience that required to complete a given task or to make decisions. Some people are not competent enough to manage their time, responsibilities and deadlines. In such instances, this type of leadership where there is minimum guidance, feedback and steer might take the organizational objectives off-track. Additionally, scholarly article of Chaudhry & Javed [35] have also reviewed the impact and effect of delegative leadership style on organizational performance indicators in different sectors.

3.4 Strategic Leadership

Global trends and dynamisms that complexes the modern demands, specifically in the field of administration and leadership, has exemplified the insufficiencies of the traditional leadership approaches. Hence, it calls for a more systematic, innovative and knowledge-driven leadership approach, in order to ensure the

efficacy of the Education sector and to remain competitive in the corporate domain [36]. In today's world, in any sector, the leader's knowledge and skills and the ability to be innovative has defines the success of an organization itself. In this context, strategic leadership is an ideal style of leadership that is observed in the administrative scenarios [37]. It is essentially a leadership modality 'within/ of' an organization. The Most prominent characteristic of this type of leadership is that it has a wide vision, and it takes that vision in to practice [11]. Strategic leadership fundamentally corresponds to the change. It is a leadership style that goes beyond the rote employer- employee relationship, rather to stress on the achievement of organizational goals in a dynamic environment [10]. Strategic leaders are an asset to an organization, and they are able to influence the followers in a volatile, complex, ambiguous and uncertain scenarios [27].

4. DETERMINANT FACTORS OF LEADERSHIP STYLE IN AN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION

There are several factors that determines the most appropriate and effective leadership style/ or a combination of leadership styles that is suitable for different institutional situations. Especially leadership in education requires careful and open-minded, as it is a sensitive and dynamic set-up with unpredictable rapid fluctuations. Some of these are physical factors, while others are contextually sensitive factors.

4.1 Context of the Organization

Context of the organization includes the size and the nature of the organization [19]. When the size of the organization increases, layers at which the decision has to make also increases exponentially. Hence, the leadership at macro level has to disintegrate in to several micro layers, so the different strata might call for different leadership styles depending on the nature of the work it is responsible for. Larger in the school population, it is importance yet harder to infuse the participatory leadership since the single message should reach out to a wider community.

4.2 Extent of Communication/ Interaction

In an Educational set-up, it is imperative to maintain a healthy and clear communication mechanism [38]. A leadership style that is endowed with superior communication skills as

well as organizational skills is a must for the organization efficacy. Quality and quantity of communication are key factors which determines the leadership style as well as the effectiveness of it in accomplishing common targets. Communication also gauges the level of dynamicity of leadership style.

4.3 Nature and Unanimity of the Members in the Organization

Disposition of the members in the organization is crucial in determining the leadership style/s and its appropriacy to the specific organization [39]. Hence, the member's inclination towards ensuring collaborating in the organizational decision-making process and contributing effectively in achieving the organizational goals is undoubtedly a focal point in authenticating the contextually sensitive organizational leadership style [40]. Congruence towards reaching agreed organizational goals is also another factor which is intricately interwoven with the nature of the organizational member, since the leadership style is the driving force which take the organization towards that ultimate result [41]. Unity of direction of each part of the organization towards common goal attainment requires a blend of different leadership styles in order to establish the most conducive and organization specific style.

4.4 Levels of Involvement in Decision-making

In centralized organizations there is little or no provision for the lower layer of employees to participate in the decision-making process, rather the directives are made at the top level and imposed on the layers following (Eberlin, & Tatum, 2008). In such organizations authoritative leadership is prominent where they minimally demonstrate democratic or participating leadership approaches.

The existing literature on the organizational leadership recognizes five layers of decision-making, which reveals their style of leadership [42].

Level one: the leaders make the decision alone and impose on others

This is acceptable in situations where immediate actions required to be compliant. In such situations, leaders should be thoroughly

competent, confident and accurate on the decision that they make.

Level two: leaders make decisions with the participation of stakeholders

Participation of key stakeholders is confined to provision of information which assist the leaders to make the decision on behalf of the entire organization.

Level three: in making the final decision, leaders consult subgroups yet hold the authority

At his level, the leaders consult subgroups/ expert committees who can work on behalf of the organization and provide information and recommendations. These smaller groups have representative knowledge. Leaders make the final decision after reviewing the said information and recommendations.

Level four: building consensus along with a team

Here the leaders are also a part of the team where the decisions are taken, yet the leader is only one 'voter' among many. In this process, all possible options are compromised before agreeing on a final decision.

Level five: Delegate the decision-making with the criteria to be fulfilled to a team

At this level, decision-making responsibility is solely given to a team representing each tier of the organization, yet they have to consider the given criteria in the decision-making process. If the ultimate decision does not comply to the stipulated criteria, the leaders can ask the team to reconsider the decision taken.

5. EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a process of influencing and building consensus towards achieving common goals. Successful leaders in an educational organization has a clear vision of the future of their organization, which steers the process of teaching and learning as well as planning and making required policies, policy implementation and setting priorities [43]. Further, leadership in an organization is 'anticipating the future' through influencing each and every stakeholder by inspiring their behaviours, thinking and feelings

and driving them strategically towards achieving organizational goals [44]. However, it is evident that despite the proven effectiveness of leaders, they have to face numerous obstacles which they have to tackle and manage tactfully in order to gain organizational success.

A renowned American scholar and an organizational consultant, Warren Bennis [45] acclaims that 'leadership is a creative enterprise involving all in innovation and initiation'. Especially in an organization related to education, innovativeness and initiation skills in decision-making is paramount because of its fragile nature and due to the involvement of a wider community. Overall, inculcated vision and consistency of each and every member in an organization is central in managing and leading an educational organization where students be able to excel academically as well as professionally as active contributors of societal development in the future. Amanchukwu, et al., [42] says that effective leadership in educational scenario always requires a shift from orthodox system approach and introducing and implementing a radical transformation to address the ever-changing societal and international demands.

Quality of education administration indicators includes how the education leaders continuously train and engage academic and non-academic staff and how the innovativeness in inculcate in their own system in ever-changing environment [19]. Hence effective leadership in an education set-up calls for understanding the role of each and every tier (such as relieving teachers form non-teaching tasks). After careful scrutiny of available literature on education leadership, it is evident that practicing an effective leadership style in an educational organization is crucial in yielding sustained success. Selecting a practicing the most effective and feasible leadership style provides the organization with and holistic approach based on the context, which will pave the way to the coherent functioning of the school affairs [19]. Further, the leadership style that is to be practice in an education organization should be objective driven, since education is a field which cater to a wider community with diverse interests and circumstances. Effective leadership style in an educational organization should specifically provide an updating framework of work, where the organizational and its partakers improve rapidly along with the growing demands [43]. As for any other organization, the most suitable

leadership style in an education set-up is vital since it should be able to benchmark the opportunities and strengths as well as identify the threats and challengers in order to thrive successfully.

6. CONCLUSION

Many theoretical, empirical and practical investigations hypothesises the need of education leadership based on different organizational methodologies and issues. Yet, leadership is a sensitive approach which is vehemently depends on context and organizational understanding. Specially in an education background, this becomes a reflective ability to liaise the theory with the interests of a wider community. Overall, this article discussed the about different leadership approaches and styles and how they can be merged and practices in an education management for the best applicable approach. Based on the examination of educational leadership in relation with the quality of education outcome, it could be concluded that if the most suitable leadership style can be identified and applied in an education organization, it would refine the organizational outcomes and facilitate the goal achievement. The authors wish to propose that every educational organization should practice outstanding educational leadership for better progression of school quality and to enhance the visionary management of the organization as well. Education managers have to take crucial and sensitive decisions and judgments on a daily basis, which requires a blend of leadership styles. Thus, bridging the gaps between leadership theories with practices needs to tackled carefully, for which the education managers should be thorough with different leadership approaches, their qualities and benefits. Hence, school leaders are encouraged to be explorative to combine the leadership styles discussed in this article and discover the most suitable strategic approach that yields the best expected results.

Effective leadership in school administration is relatively rapid, influential and cost-effective if applied aptly. The understanding of the most suitable leadership style or the combination of leadership styles are beneficial for many purposes including improving educational management, team building, enhancing teaching-learning process and inculcating the culture of innovativeness in school which are ultimate goals of successful school administration.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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