

Theory of fiedler s contingency model management essay

[Business](#), [Management](#)



Contents

Introduction to Leadership

" Leaders aren't born, they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work. And that's the price we'll have to pay to achieve that goal, or any goal." - Vince Lombardi (Sarkis, 2011). Stogdill astutely notes that " there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept" (Siagian, 2005).

Definitions can be used to serve a variety of purposes. Bass (1960) noted that the definition used in a particular study of leadership depends on the purposes of the study. Therefore, leadership has been seen as the focus of group processes, as a personality attribute, as the art of inducing compliance, as an exercise of influence, as a particular kind of act, as a form of persuasion, as a power relation, as an instrument in the attainment of goals, as an effect of interaction, as a differentiated role, and as the initiation of structure. One complex definition that has evolved, particularly to help understand a wide variety of research findings, describes effective leadership as the interaction among members of a group that initiates and maintains improved expectations and the competence of the group to solve problems or to attain goals (Bass, 1990, pp. 19-20). This essay shall analyse the research, ideas and theories of leadership and reflect their effectiveness in the management of people in the workplace. The topics to be first covered are the leadership concepts, distinction between managers and leaders, leadership styles, leadership models and lastly about global leadership.

Leadership described

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Defining leadership as a process means that it is not a trait or characteristic that resides in the leader but a transactional event that occurs between the leader and his or her followers. The people who engage in leadership will be called leaders, and those toward whom leadership is directed will be called followers. Both leaders and followers are involved together in the leadership process. Although leaders and followers are closely linked, it is the leader who often initiates the relationship, creates the communication linkages, and carries the burden for maintaining the relationship (Northouse, 2007, pp. 3-5).

Trait definition Process definition**of leadership of leadership****Leader****Leader****Can be observed****Resides in people****Height****Leadership****Leadership Intelligence****Extroversion Interaction****Fluency****Other traits****Followers****Followers**

Figure 1 – The different views of Leadership (Northouse, 2007).

Managers and leaders, are they different?

The difference between managers and leaders lies in the conceptions they hold, deep in their psyches, of chaos and order. Managers embrace process, seek stability and control, and impulsively try to resolve problems quickly – sometimes before they fully understand a problem’s significance. Leaders, in contrast, tolerate chaos and lack of structure and are willing to delay conclusions in order to understand the issues more fully. In this way,

Zalesnik argued, business leaders have much more in common with artists, scientists, and other creative thinkers than they do with managers.

Organizations need both managers and leaders to succeed, but developing both requires a reduced focus on logic and strategic exercises in favor of an environment where creativity and imagination are permitted to flourish (Zalesnik, 2004, p. 74).

Leadership styles

Leadership style is the method and approach of providing direction, executing plans and encouraging people. Kurt Lewin and his colleagues piloted a research on leadership decision making styles and recognized three basic leadership styles which they characterized as Autocratic, Democratic and Laissez-faire (BusinessMate, 2009-2010). When making decisions, leaders were found to demonstrate one of these three comprehensive leadership styles. Autocratic leadership style - These leaders unify all decision making power to themselves. They give direct orders and directives. Communication is often one-way, and the leaders do not pursue any ideas from the subordinates. This leadership style will hypothetically work best, when there is no need for input. The advantage of this leadership style is that it authorizes a quick decision-making process. Likewise, this leadership style may persuade the respective leader, who will be influential enough to control employees and issue orders autocratically. The drawbacks of this leadership style could be that subordinates would get frustrated by the dictatorial ways of decision-making, and that a given decision may not be as successful without the involvement and input from the subordinates

(BusinessMate, 2009-2010). Democratic or participative leadership style - Democratic leaders often involve subordinates and groups in the decision-making. The respective leader will have the final say, but only after having consulted the subordinates. This leadership will potentially be most viable when leaders do not have full perception into the consequences of a specific decision, and when an involvement of subordinates may reinforce the outcome of the decision. The advantage of this leadership style could be that subordinates will feel more motivated, and that any given decision will be enhanced by the knowledge derived from the consultation. The drawbacks could be that decision making is too slow, and that it becomes difficult to reach a consensus on what is the right solution (BusinessMate, 2009-2010).

Laissez-faire or Free-rein leadership style - Laissez-faire leaders minimize their involvement in the decision-making, and let the subordinates decide on issues for themselves. This leadership style will potentially be most achievable when subordinates are fully proficient to make their own decisions, and when the leader do not have the adequate understanding of a given decisional problems. The advantage of this style is that subordinates get all the decision-making power to make conclusions, so that they will be enabled to make sound decisions within their monarchy of expertise. Likewise, subordinates may feel motivated by this delegation of power, which may enrich their jobs. The drawbacks of this leadership style could be that subordinates are not coordinated, and that work may be unstructured (BusinessMate, 2009-2010). Although Kurt Lewin and his colleagues found the democratic leadership style as the most effective in their research, leaders will potentially have to choose which style may fit best to the

situation. Sometimes leaders must exhibit an autocratic leadership style that will speed up decision-making, and sometimes choose a democratic style when the situation calls for it. Great leaders will know when to use which style, so that decision-making can be as effective and efficient as possible, and so that the leadership style chosen will reflect the needs and objectives of the given decision-making situation (BusinessMate, 2009-2010).

http://www.ustudy.in/imagebrowser/view/image/6027/_original Figure 2 - Styles of Leadership (Anand K, 2008).

Leadership models

Leadership models help you to distinguish what makes leaders act the way they do. The epitome is not to lock you into a type of behaviour disputed in the model, but to understand that every situation calls for different attitude or actions to be taken. Five theories were advanced to reconcile differences among the findings regarding leader behaviour. These were Fiedler's Contingency theory of leadership, the Path-Goal theory of leader effectiveness, Hersey and Blanchard's life cycle theory, the Cognitive Resource and the Decision Process theory (House & Aditya, 1997, p. 421).

theory of Fiedler's Contingency model

Fred E. Fiedler's contingency theory of leadership effectiveness was based on studies of a wide range of group effectiveness, and focused on the relationship between leadership and organizational performance. According to him, if an organization needs to attain group effectiveness through leadership, then there is a must to assess the leader according to an

underlying trait, evaluate the situation faced by the leader, and construct a proper match between the two (managementstudyguide. com, 2008-2012).

Leader's trait

The attitude of the leader is assessed through a questionnaire in which the leader would be asked to rank individuals' in terms of whom they would least like to work with, this is referred to as the " least preferred co-worker" (LPC) scale. The questionnaire consists of a list of 16 different items which are ranked from one to eight, with eight being the most favourable. Some of the items in the LPC scale are pleasant/unpleasant, friendly/unfriendly, tense/relaxed, efficient/inefficient etc.

Pleasant

Unpleasant

8

7

6

5

4

3

2

1

Figure 3 – An example of an item on the LPC scale

Fiedler states that leaders with high LPC scores are relationship-oriented and the ones with low scores are task-oriented. It follows that leaders with high LPC rating are more inclined towards the interpersonal relationships and leaders with low LPC rating are more focused on the performance of the task and achievement of objectives (managementstudyguide. com, 2008-2012).

Situational Factor

According to Fiedler, a leader's demeanour is dependent upon the favourability of the leadership situation. There are three elements that would depict how encouraging the situation is to a particular leader. These are:

Leader-member relations - This represents the likeability factor of the leader and how willing the employees would be to follow the leader's instructions.

Task structure - This represents how structured the task is, how detailed the

task is and to what extent the instructions need to be adhered to. Position power - This represents the authority the leader has within the organisation and hence the power they wield over their employees in order to accept their leadership. With the help of these three variables, eight combinations of group-task situations were constructed by Fiedler. These combinations were used to identify the style of the leader (managementstudyguide. com, 2008-2012). [http://www. managementstudyguide. com/images/fiedlers-contingency-model. gif](http://www.managementstudyguide.com/images/fiedlers-contingency-model.gif) Figure 4 - Correlation between leader's LPC scores and group effectiveness (managementstudyguide. com, 2008-2012).

Leadership effectiveness

A leader's effectiveness can be explained by the relationship between their style of leadership and how favourable the situational variables are towards them. The ideal situation is when the " leader-member relations" are good, the task is structured and the leader's position of power is strong. Research on the contingency model has shown that task-oriented leaders are more effective in highly favourable (1, 2, 3) and highly unfavourable situation (7, 8), whereas relationship-oriented leaders are more effective in situations of intermediate favourableness (4, 5, 6) (managementstudyguide. com, 2008-2012).

The Path-Goal theory of leader effectiveness

Path-Goal theory was developed to refer to how leaders inspire subordinates to get done their designated goals. According to House and Mitchell (1974), leadership creates motivation when it increases the amount and type of payoffs that subordinates receive from their work. Leadership also persuades

when it makes the pathway to the goal clear and easy to travel through coaching and direction, when it removes obstacles and roadblocks to attaining the goal, and when it makes the work itself more personally satisfying (Northouse, 2007, p. 128).

Leader behaviours

Directive

Supportive

Participative

Achievement oriented

Subordinates characteristics

Task characteristics

Subordinates Goals productivity

Figure 5 - Major components of Path-Goal theory (Northouse, 2007, p. 128).

The figure above illustrates the different components of the theory. This concept suggests that each type of leader behaviour has a different kind of influence on subordinates' motivation. Whether particular leader behaviour is motivating to subordinates is contingent on the subordinates' individualities and the characteristics of the task (Northouse, 2007, p. 128).

Hersey and Blanchard's life cycle theory

The situational leadership theory puts forward that subordinates enthusiasm to complete the task, called subordinate maturity is determined by subordinates' achievement motivation, ability and eagerness to undertake responsibility, education and experience relevant to the task. If readiness is

low, the leader should be highly task directive but low on relationship orientation. This is called directing because the subordinate is new to the task and needs specific instructions and close task supervision most of the time (K. Iyer). As follower readiness increases and as the subordinate gains task experience and confidence, the leader should add high relationship behaviour to high task behaviour. This is called coaching, as the subordinate is now ready for more explanation of how and why the task is performed (K. Iyer). At the next stage of follower readiness, the leader can drop high task orientation while sustaining high relationship behaviour. This is called supporting because the follower now needs less task direction and is ready to contribute to task decisions (K. Iyer). Subordinates' requiring neither high leader task nor high relationship behaviour marks the final stage of follower readiness. This leader behaviour is called delegating because readiness is high and the leader can give the subordinate responsibility for making and implementing decisions (K. Iyer). Situational leadership theory requires a leader to be able to diagnose follower maturity, vary relationship and task-oriented behaviour for different followers at different times (K. Iyer).

<http://executopia.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/FLS-model.jpg> Figure 6 - The Situational Leadership model in relation to development level of followers (Hersey & Blanchard).

Cognitive resource theory

Cognitive resource theory assumes that the more intelligent and knowledgeable leaders create better plans and decisions than do those with less ability and knowledge (E. Fiedler, 2006, p. 533). Avolio et. al (2009)

states that cognitive theories of leadership are distinctive from many other leadership concepts in which there is just not one precise theory that describes that category. Instead, the term refers to a broad range of approaches with the communal prominence upon how leaders, supervisors, and followers process information and act upon these reasoning (Lucsko, p. 2). Cognitive Resource Theory predicts that: A leader's cognitive ability contributes to the performance of the team only when the leader's approach is directive. When leaders are better at planning and decision-making, in order for their plans and decisions to be executed, they need to articulate people what to do, rather than wanting they would agree with them. When they are not better than people in the team, then a non-directive method is more appropriate, for example they can facilitate an open debate where the ideas of the team can be exchanged and the best approach is renowned and performed (Changing Minds, 2013). Stress affects the relationship between intelligence and decision quality. When there is low stress, then intelligence is fully efficient and makes the finest involvement. However, during high stress, a natural intelligence not only makes any alteration, but it may also have an adverse effect. One reason for this may be that an intelligent person pursues sensible results, which may not be obtainable. Another possibility is that the leader retreats within him/her, to think hard about the problem, leaving the group to their own strategies (Changing Minds, 2013).

Experience is positively related to decision quality under high stress. When there is a high stress situation and intelligence is compromised, experience of the same or similar situations endows the leader to react in suitable ways without having to think carefully about the situation. Experience of decision-

making under stress also will contribute to a better decision than trying to muddle through with brain-power alone (Changing Minds, 2013). For simple tasks, leader intelligence and experience is irrelevant. When subordinates are given tasks which do not need direction or support, then it does not matter how good the leader is at making decisions, because they are easy to make, even for subordinates, and hence do not need any further support (Changing Minds, 2013).

the Decision Process theory

Vroom and Yetton (1973) developed a contingency model of decision-making to regulate effective leadership behaviours in different situations. Heilman, et al. (1984) were some of the many researchers who scrutinized the validity of Vroom and Yetton's contingency model. They determined that the insight of the individual observing a leader influences the way in which he/she assesses that leader's task effectiveness. Data from this study designate a dependably more favourable effective reaction to the participative leader than to the autocratic leader, irrespective of the subject's point of view or the circumstances (R. Fairholm, 2002, p. 7). Vroom and Jago (1988) also stimulates the engagement of followers in significant problems and solving those problems in an agenda of participation throughout the organization (R. Fairholm, 2002, p. 23). It does not acknowledge dealing with all of leadership or of what leaders do, instead it concentrates only on those aspects bearing on power sharing by leaders and on participation and influence by those who work with them (H. Vroom & G. Jago, 1988).

Global Leadership

Issues of global leadership encroach on our lives every day. Business, politics, and popular culture are on the world stage, an atmosphere of political, economic, and social changes. Our runaway world is out of control, filled with threats and culturally complex. Geert Hofstede (1980) opened the eyes of the business world to the importance of culture to management almost 30 years ago. More recently, The GLOBE Study has prolonged and advanced the allegations of culture for leadership. Rodbeck, Hanges, Dickson, Gupta, and Dorfman (2004) concluded from The GLOBE Study that societal values were the most important influence on desired leadership within organizations. Dorfman, et al. (2004) developed from The GLOBE Study results that culturally endorsed leadership profiles describe the leadership patterns of the study's 10 cultural clusters. They demonstrated that the values, ideas, and beliefs of a culture or culture cluster determine its conception of effective leadership. Anne proposed a Global leadership-learning pyramid which integrates broad issues of globalization, history, culture and leadership, determines nation state cultural patterns and implications for leadership and adapts western theories for cross-cultural use (W. Perkins, 2009, pp. 72-74).

Conclusion

Leadership is the driving force for any organisation and also determines the success or failure of it. And if leadership is not on the right track, everything below collapses. It is clear by analysing the above leadership models that each one of them has its own advantages and disadvantages, and depending

on the situation, a leader might implement any one of the models. For leaders to avoid failure and hit the road to success, they should follow the fundamentals of leadership, avoid being judgemental, practice positive thinking and motivation. Leaders must deliberately slow their pace, stay connected with their team, enlist others to help fulfil their vision. Everyone needs help from time to time and the sign of a great leader is that they are humble and open to receiving help when needed. Finally, to conclude, Leadership may fall at times, but a good leader is the one who accepts the flaws, learns from their mistakes and then moves forward with an even better vision for the organisation. It is unlikely to believe that there is only one philosophy on leadership, which can benefit the management of people in an organisation. Rather, the variety of theories built upon the subject can help manage the working atmosphere and support in the assessment and training of employees.