

Leadership approach suggested by lao tzu



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First of all let us define leadership?

Leadership is a very essential issue and can be understood in different views. It would be very hard to give leadership a general definition because many writers have tried without reaching an accord.

According to Mullins, 2005, Good Leadership involves the effective process of delegation and empowerment. The Leadership relationship is not limited to leader behaviour resulting in subordinate behaviour

Susan Ward, 1997 gave a simple definition of Leadership as the art of motivating a group of people to act towards achieving a common goal.

" Leadership in simplest terms can be defined as an ability through which you can gain followers. To gain followers requires authority but does not exclude the lack of reliability to achieve this. Whether you are the managing director or a shift leader, the way you lead is the single biggest success factor for everyone you work with. Leaders change the organisations around them. They make a difference to the business, rather than just making the business work. Leadership is about what you do. It involves learnable skills that can be applied to the tasks that occur in every business."

Storr A. 1996

Leaders can generally be defined as those who take action when they do not want to leave things to chance.

" Leadership can also be defined as an instrument of goal achievement"

Bass 1990: 15-16

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" Leadership is behaviour, not a position"

Bass 1990

" The superior leader gets things done with very little motion. He imparts instruction not through many words but through a few deeds. He keeps informed about everything but interferes hardly at all. He is a catalyst, and though things would not get done well if he weren't there, when they succeed he takes no credit. And because he takes no credit, credit never leaves him."

Lao Tse, Tao Te Ching

Famous Quotes on Leadership

" To lead people, walk beside them ... As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honour and praise. The next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate ... When the best leader's work is done the people say, 'We did it ourselves!'"

- Lao-tsu

" If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall in the ditch."

- Jesus Christ

" Dictators ride to and fro upon tigers which they dare not dismount. And the tigers are getting hungry."

- Winston Churchill

" Control is not leadership; management is not leadership; leadership is leadership. If you seek to lead, invest at least 50% of your time in leading

yourself-your own purpose, ethics, principles, motivation, conduct. Invest at least 20% leading those with authority over you and 15% leading your peers."

- Dee Hock

Founder and CEO Emeritus, Visa

" Leadership is intentional influence."

- Michael McKinney

" People ask the difference between a leader and a boss. The leader leads, and the boss drives."

- Theodore Roosevelt

" Four rules of leadership in a free legislative body:

First, no matter how hard-fought the issue, never get personal. Don't say or do anything that may come back to haunt you on another issue, another day....

Second, do your homework. You can't lead without knowing what you're talking about....

Third, the American legislative process is one of give and take. Use your power as a leader to persuade, not intimidate....

Fourth, be considerate of the needs of your colleagues, even if they're at the bottom of the totem pole...." - George Bush

Former President of the United States

Chester Barnard, 1997, believes that a good leader must have qualities such as Validity, Endurance, Intellectual Capacity, Persuasiveness and he should be responsible for any decision taken.

THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP

The Rise of Contemporary Leadership Theory

Theories of leadership in any period are driven by a set of convictions and hopes on the part of the theorist. One certainty is that swift societal development makes it crucial to keep one's pulse on social changes and their implications for how groups of human beings can best be led, a natural assumption in the writings of leadership theorist Rosabeth Moss Kanter and numerous other scholars. A challenging view is that human nature is stagnant and unchanging and that the lasting lessons of history provide surer instruction in leadership than do the passing ripples of modernity. Ironically, the exemplars of this view are relatively ancient figures such as Lao Tzu and Machiavelli

TRAIT THEORY OF LEADERSHIP:

Trait theory is all about the types of personality tendencies and behaviour linked through effective leadership. Many theorists argued that key leadership trait include motivation; desire to seek power, self confidence to name a few. The biggest disapproval of this theory is that it suggests that leadership personality are inherited hence one is born with them.

BEHAVIORAL AND STYLE THEORY OF LEADERSHIP:

Another theory you should include in your leadership dissertation is "

Behavioural and style theory of leadership. In this theory the theorists stated that unlike the trait theory, leadership is not a set of traits but a pattern of motives. The Behavioural leadership grid model by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton based on concern for people and concern for productivity which are the basis of five different leadership styles. Studying this model will give you very clear emphasize of how to identify a clear leader.

SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY:

This theory presumes that different styles of leaderships are better in different situations. Many theorists have given their views about this theory. It's better to understand what each theorist proposes as to understand what they perceive is the right action on a certain situation.

CONTINGENCY THEORY:

Contingency theories of leadership focus on particular variables related to the environment that might determine which particular style of leadership is best suited for the situation. According to this theory, no leadership style is best in all situations. Success depends upon a number of variables, including the leadership style, qualities of the followers, and aspects of the situation.

PARTICIPATIVE THEORY:

Participative leadership theories suggest that the ideal leadership style is one that takes the input of others into account. These leaders encourage participation and contributions from group members and help group

members feel more relevant and committed to the decision-making process. In participative theories, however, the leader retains the right to allow the input of others.

MANAGEMENT THEORY:

Management theories (also known as " Transactional theories") focus on the role of supervision, organization, and group performance. These theories base leadership on a system of reward and punishment. Managerial theories are often used in business; when employees are successful, they are rewarded; when they fail, they are reprimanded or punished.

RELATIONSHIP THEORY:

Relationship theories (also known as " Transformational theories") focus upon the connections formed between leaders and followers. These leaders motivate and inspire people by helping group members see the importance and higher good of the task. Transformational leaders are focused on the performance of group members, but also want each person to fulfil his or her potential. These leaders often have high ethical and moral standards.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter and Kendra Van Wagner, 2001

Leadership at All Levels

" Leadership - whoever is doing it - is about creating positive change to achieve long-term objectives.

1. 1 Leadership involves setting goals, then moving the business towards them.

Making the best use of resources, including people's potential, is the key skill.

1. 2 Leaders have to earn the authority to lead.

For example, in a new job you should usually start by asking questions. You need a sound knowledge base before you start making decisions on technical issues.

People need to be convinced of a leader's expertise and determination.

1. 3 Leading a team means developing and motivating individuals and group.

This includes helping people find meaning and purpose in what they are doing, so that it is seen to be worthwhile.

Leaders create more leaders. By setting a positive example and allowing people to learn and develop on the job, you encourage them to take a more proactive role.

1. 4 Leaders must often press ahead where managers see problems and back off.

For example, every new product idea will face a series of obstacles. A leader will find a way around each of them. Leaders at supervisor or office level need backing, as it is often difficult for them to be recognised as leaders by their workmates".

Odirone, George S. 1961. How managers make things happen

VIEWS ON LEADERSHIP

" Leaders and leading are different. Leading is initiating change by developing the plan, implementing and evaluating the plan. Leaders work with others at all levels to explore the nature of the required change. A leader learns from others, mentors, and coaches. Leading is the verb, leader the noun. Both are necessary for change."

Linda Burnes, 2001

" Leadership is self discovery, and facilitation for others. It is the energy potential that evolves from the synergy of being in the right place and in the right frame of mind at the right time. This definition requires one to intuitively discover self, develop keen intuition, seek a positive attitude, utilize active listening skills and practice honest communications."

Bass 1990

Leadership could also be the balancing energy for mind, body and spirit harmony.

Leadership can be compassionate: Compassionate leadership is the ability to be there for others, without withdrawing and without judgment.

Unconditional compassion for us leads naturally to unconditional compassion for others. There are whole parts of ourselves that are so unwanted that whenever they begin to emerge in ourselves or others, we run away. We can learn to use all the unwanted things in our lives to awaken compassion for ourselves and others. We can then relate compassionately to people and things we would rather push away. A compassionate leader is centred,

accepting, honest and clear, helping others find their path toward wholeness while seeking wholeness oneself.

LAO-TZU view on Leadership

" To lead people, walk beside them ... As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honour and praise. The next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate ... When the best leader's work is done the people say, 'We did it ourselves!' Lao Tzu

From the above quote from Lao Tzu, his views on what a good leader should be are listed below:

A good leader should be able to always sort himself out by adopting an array of self-oriented mechanisms to improve self performances such as self goal-setting, self-reward, self-criticism and by reconstructing his approach to management in alignment with the strategy of being a good leader.

A good leader should always be able to " walk the talk", and to demonstrate the tight link between rhetoric and deed to others.

A good leader should apply this attitude to his subordinates, embracing them in their own goal-setting and provide positive strokes wherever possible.

A good leader should believe in team work and have a self-leading culture.

A good leader should be selfless, extremely humble and never take full praise for any success the team makes.

Manz and Sims 1991

CONTEMPORARY LEADERSHIP

Democratic Leadership

This is a type of contemporary leadership.

Unlike Lao Tzu, Bass (1990) defined leadership a general definition on Leadership.

He defines Leadership as an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectations of the members. He also explained that Leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group. Any member of the group can exhibit some amount of leadership

His own view on leadership is viewed as constituting only constructive behaviours aimed at pursuing group goals.

This type of leadership was described by Lewin and Lippitt 1938; as a kind of leadership that involves the democratic leaders relying upon group decision-making, active member involvement, honest praise and criticism, and a degree of comradeship. They believed leaders using the other styles were either domineering or uninvolved.

In democratic leadership, Kutner (1950: 460) explains that Leaders need authority but the delegation of authority in a democratic group is never a mandate for any leader to employ authority without the eventual approval of the group.

" Democratic leaders are the kind that must be accountable for the decisions they make as individuals and the roles they play in the democratic group."

(Starhawk 1986)

Their position in the network of power relations also makes these leaders responsible for making lines of authority, power and decision making clear and visible.

" They must keep their agendas and motives... open and visible, not hidden."

(Starhawk 1986; 272)

Conceptions of Democratic Leadership

Distributing Responsibility among the Democratic group (DEMO)

Here, the democratic leader seeks to spread responsibility rather than to concentrate it. The essence of democratic leadership is that it shall promote opportunities for the fitting initiative of those within the society, and in the manner the latter desire.

Nagel (1987) goes further arguing that democratic leadership should not merely ask members to take on responsibility; at times, the democratic leader must be demanding in reminding people of their collective responsibilities. Some members may be less than enthusiastic to do their share, and leaders who allow free riders to exploit fellow citizens do not serve their communities well.

Empowerment

Here, Gibbs (1971) describes this as asking fellow members of the DEMOs to take on responsibility, this is one of many ways in leaders can help develop members decision making capabilities. " The members must be skilled at wide variety of tasks, such as speaking, thinking and organizing" (Evans and Boyte 1986).

" Democratic Leadership can augment member's skills by setting high but reasonable standards and asking members to challenge themselves" (Tead 1935). Member's ability may develop through taking on new responsibilities, but leaders can also play a direct role by offering instruction or suggestion, particularly when asked to do so.

Democratic leaders show genuine care and concern for the members of the DEMO (Starhawk 1986, Desjardins and Brown 1991) but not in a way that makes them into a substitute parent or guardian. A democratic leader must never manipulate the masses through shrewd exploitation of their mentality

Aiding Deliberation

Democratic Leaders must distribute responsibility appropriately and empower other group members, but they must devote the bulk of their time and energy to ensuring productive and democratic decision-making.

" Deliberation is the heart of democracy" (Barber 1984; Mathews 1988)

Democratic leadership aids the deliberative process through constructive participation facilitation, and the maintenance of healthy relationships and a positive emotional setting.

Conclusion

In conclusion, one would believe this quote from Linda Burnes saying " Leaders and leading are different. Leading is initiating change by developing the plan, implementing and evaluating the plan. Leaders work with others at all levels to explore the nature of the required change."

As a leader you have to learn to commune your idea or the vision of your company to the people you want to follow you. You must have zeal because you have to show your followers that you want to accomplish the goal as badly as they do, your zeal will drive them. You must learn to be a great decision maker. Sometimes, leaders must face times of pressure where they are forced to make quick decisions; a great leader must have this skill. You must be a team builder. To become a great leader, you must first make your followers great, you must have the authority to give your team responsibilities, and trust them too, and you must slowly make them greater and greater. You must also have character because your innate character strengths play a critical role in your leadership style.

You must also be able to understand your followers and be able to speak their language in order to communicate properly with them.

From research leadership can viewed as a phenomenon that is constantly changing. This essay has highlighted some leadership approaches and behaviours but there is no predicted way of behaviour for a leader. It is a matter of contingency