

A critical reflection of my own experience of leadership

[Experience](#)



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Introduction

This critical reflection is focused on my own experience of leadership whereby I suggest areas for my own development. I am also using herewith leadership theory and concepts in analysing and evaluating the leadership case that I am presenting. Leadership is a process or series of actions directed toward group goals; it is a consistently demonstrated pattern of behaviour with certain objectives (Ricketts and Ricketts, 2011).

The leadership experience that this paper tackles is centred on my previous supervisor in a previous job, who I call “ Mr. M.” I deem it interesting to use my experience with his leadership case as I believe this would allow me to suggest areas for my own development. The case is therefore an observation of leadership in action where I am not a leader.

Critical Reflection: Analysis and Evaluation

Mr. M delegates tasks as a way to manage the myriad responsibilities within the workplace. Often, meetings are called for in order to update the whole team on the work that members have accomplished. Mr. M’s listening skills were excellent, in that he never missed any single point of information being related to him. From this set of information, he was able to synthesise clearly the ideas being presented to him; regard each chunk of information as a potential contribution to what the team was trying to achieve, and identify the problems and challenges along the way. He did all this with the help of the team, in which it must also be noted that teamwork is a necessary

element of leadership, which must be considered in successful leadership (Parker, 2008).

A good attribute that was commendable of Mr. M was his ability to see positively a certain scenario despite our perceived griminess of it. He was a democratic leader who held the final responsibility whilst delegating authority to others. With his leadership, our communication – both upward and downward – was active. There was likewise high employee commitment because we were able to participate in the decision-making process of our team. This way, Mr. M. was able to encourage employees to function beyond just being rank-and-file workers. This concept of leadership was also present in Pride and colleagues (2010) in their discussion of leadership styles. Moreover, this scenario was harmonious with transformational leadership theory, which is focused on people's interaction with others as they create a solid relationship that leads to trust, which in turn leads to increased intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in both the leader and the followers (Gittens, 2009; Lussier and Achua, 2010).

Job autonomy was also encouraged much in the team and the organisation itself, with a minimum space for supervision from the supervisor himself. This way, as a member of the team, I was able to enhance my commitment to the job as I likewise felt being the one who owned the tasks and felt a sense of achievement in return. Greater job autonomy certainly created identity in the job amongst us who were tasked to fulfill them. This atmosphere of responsibility and autonomy made me and the others appreciate our jobs better. This was also parallel to what Bligh and Riggio

(2013) say about autonomy and job control in which they claimed that they (autonomy and job control) lead to employee empowerment. May I say that my own engagement with my work was drawn from high levels of empowerment and autonomy, which my supervisor helped to foster, especially in leader-follower distance, with the leader not always being present to look over the followers' shoulders (e. g. Bligh and Riggio, 2013). Transactional theory could be found in the case example, whereby it demonstrates a transaction between the leader and the followers, giving importance to a positive and mutually beneficial relationship (Martin et al., 2006). The effectiveness of this theory is found in the development of a mutually reinforcing environment, for which individual goals and those of the organisation are in synch.

Furthermore, problem solving was not a sole task of our supervisor, but one that involved everyone in our team; thus, a group-shared activity. Mr. M acted as much to take the role of a facilitator in his intention to involve everyone in problem solving, laying down his views and opinions toward a particular direction, without dismissing others' perspectives. The path-goal theory is seen in this example, whereby the leader directs activities, with varying manners. The theory maintains that the leader sees a path that needs to be trod and gets the group to accomplish it by commanding, rewarding, soliciting suggestions, etc. (Griffin and Moorhead, 2012).

However, I came to know that he did not go through development programmes for creative problem solving, which I think is necessary, considering that for a leader, the use of collaborative skills and creativity

techniques is part of the leadership strategy, just as what Higgins (2012) had suggested.

In this regard, since Mr. M enabled his people to work well in delegation, he was able to function well as a coach. He was the kind who was willing to delegate and was comfortable to hand off assignments to the team. The kind of matters he delegated to those he led was not simply those referring to tasks but to responsibilities, which also harmonised with the discussion of Lussier and Achua (2010). Mr. M was not the kind of leader who would think that he was the boss with adequate knowledge and experience as an approach to problem solving. Solving problems by a leader because he thinks he is the most capable one is what Tracy (2013) called reverse delegation. Instead, Mr. M avoids committing this reverse delegation by making us define the problem clearly, developing a range of solutions, and selecting a solution being recommended. I believe Mr. M was able to grow his staff – which was one of his major responsibilities as a leader – by helping them develop problem-solving skills. I once asked him for a solution to a certain problem, and his responses was (as always) “ What do you think must be done in this situation?” Thus, in many cases, he was able to make team members determine the best course of action for a certain problem or situation. There were times when a problem seemed too overwhelming to be handled by a member and would seek his help, to which his usual response would be to insist that the person must learn how to do it, with his guidance. Incidentally, Tracy (2013) stated that in case an employee returns to the leader with a complain that he/she could not do the job rightly, it is better for

both of them if the leader guides the person in accomplishing the job rather than taking it back and adding it to his load, which is probably full.

As much as he could, Mr. M does not take sides or intervene in interpersonal problems, to which some people in our team would attempt to make him a mediator or a counselor. His tendency was not to express an opinion showing favour to one party over the other. This stance was also taken as positive by Tracy (2013), who said that as a rule, one would not be able to have the full story, and once a leader takes a particular position, it might mean weakening his authority with both persons in the future. As a result of good performance, the performing employee was rewarded by the leader.

Areas for My Own Development

Based on the case presented, the suggested areas for my own development as a leader are: delegating responsibilities to my team members, promoting decision-making through problem solving, and motivating the workforce through a high degree of autonomy and job control. I have learned through this exercise that delegating responsibilities is not only to free or unburden the leader of the many workloads but to provide opportunities for growth. Similarly, involving the whole team toward a problem-solving activity results in providing an opportunity for decision making. Noteworthy here is the fact that decision making allows employees to become more involved in the job (Bhattacharya and McGlothlin, 2011).

I am also noting that a high level of autonomy in the job necessitates corresponding skills sets for the work, in which employees with high job

autonomy tend to perceive greater responsibility for either the success or failure of their efforts, and are also likely to experience increased job satisfaction (Lewis et al., 2007). My members' skills must therefore be in synch with the level of autonomy required in their job, and that I could help them work on developing their skills through related training and coaching.

Conclusion

To conclude, the leader plays a crucial role in the development of members and in achieving organisational goals. This insight was demonstrated by this critical reflection through its discussion of delegation, problem solving, job autonomy, and maintaining one's authority by not taking sides in members' problems with interpersonal relationships. Mr. M was able to promote trust and motivation both for himself and for his team members, typical of transformational leadership theory. Transactional theory had also demonstrated a specific transaction based on a mutually beneficial relationship between the leader and the followers. This case also complemented with the path-goal theory in which the leader guides the members in treading a desired path. The case led to identification of my own areas for development.

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