

Organization behavior

Psychology, Behaviorism



Organizational success depends ultimately depend on the quality of it's the leaders. But are leaders born successful or can they be trained? Use theories and evidence to support your discussion. Introduction A leader can be defined as a person that controls a group of people with the aim of attaining certain specifiedgoals. Leadershipdetermines the success orfailureof an organization and this can be shown how the share prices fluctuate with the change of leadership. If a renowned quality leader is appointed, the market responds by the shares increasing- the vice versa is correct.

Good organizations have credited their success to their leaders; for example, Apples boss Stephen Jobs, Richard Branson of the Virgin Atlantic and Henry Fordthe founder of Ford automobiles. It is an open secret that these leaders had their personal conviction to do whatever they were doing. Apart from a leader being decisive, having charisma, he/she has to still have some trained skilled which are either acquired during their working period or trained. It is to this effect that the leader can decide to choose which skill to use at a particular time.

In this regards a leaders should be able to interact with others in the organization with ease so that they can get as much information as possible. One-on-onecommunicationis very important because this makes the followers to have a feeling of being in a team thus eliciting intrinsicmotivationand eventual job satisfaction. Organizational success entirely depends on the success of its leaders to plan and manage issues and resources in the organization in a synchronized way. Read also W illiam Ouchi's Theory Z

The ability of leaders cannot only be successful by considering their innate skills, they also have to consider other factors including; their ability to judge their subordinates appropriately and assigning them tasks they are able to accomplish. Equally important is the need for good leaders to be able to manage time such that the time frame stipulated in attainment of the organization's goal is catered for. They too have to have basic skills in management skill and be able to read financial statements so that they can know where their organization is heading to.

In essence, leaders of successful organizations are people who put the interests of the organization above their own. They take blame when things go wrong and give credit to others when things go right; the back stops with them.

Trait Approach Good leadership skills can either be innate or inborn, trained or acquired. The trait approach, which stemmed from the late nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, had a notion that leaders were born. It was believed that it was a man's innate ability to lead (David: 1970).

As a result, an individual destined to lead had inborn traits or characteristics that enabled him to lead. It is to this effect that various researching agencies took the task to find out the truth behind this belief without much yield. Trait leadership approach has the perception that there are some traits that the society considers as leadership traits thus enabling the society to identify leaders (Greenbury: 1999). This alludes to the perception that people are born to be leaders which is apparently not sometimes true.

This approach does not fully address the concept of leadership since it considers or mainly focuses on the leaders and not the followers. The inadequacy of this approach can be attributed to the fact that it only considers the leaders and leaves out the followers; the followers are equally important. In addition, the allegation by the trait theory that having a leader with a set of traits automatically leads to an efficient leadership (Mullins: 2000) is misguided since a leader is meant to lead others and not himself.

There is apparently no successful organizational leadership that can be attained by solely having a leader and ignoring the followers—thus the followers should be considered. Indeed it is the followers or the junior workers who do the work (they are the bakers of the cake) so ignoring their abilities is tantamount to the failure of the organization; thus it is paramount for a good leader to recognize this and ensure that indeed his/her followers' issues are taken into consideration in any decision made. It is therefore to this effect that the trait approach is limited in its approach or consideration of these issues.

Another limit that is created by the trait approach is that it confines the leader to traits like motivation, self confidence, skills and physical attributes (Rollin: 1988). This confinement is insufficient by itself since it does not take into consideration task orientation and the influence that the leader must have to command the following of his/her group. The reason why the approach is of limited usefulness in this case is that even if the leader is motivated and self confident and the followers are not, nothing of substance will be accomplished in the organization. Thus this will depict ineffectiveness in leadership.

In a nut shell, not only the leaders' qualities are necessary for the success of an organization but also those qualities of the employees who are actually micro-leaders in their various departments. The trait approach can be seen to consider the fact that leader's effectiveness or ineffectiveness is due to lack of traits which are governed by the beliefs, values and ethics of a certain locality of a group of people (Vecchio: 1988). If for instance individuals take some moral standing as the yard stake to select a leader then the concept of skills will be overlooked and therefore making the trait approach to leadership to be wanting.

It is again suicidal for an organization to entirely consider its leadership on a leader because of his/her charisma forgetting that being a leader entails more qualities than only being charismatic. In addition the concept of trait alone is insufficient because of the fact that it looks at who the individual is and not what he/she can do. An individual might have good morals, charisma and all the traits that are considered (by the society) to be good for leadership but does not have the power and what it takes to propel efficient leadership in an organization.

Therefore, traits alone are not enough to gauge individuals' leadership. The trait approach also fails to address how the leaders in this context can be made better leaders and how to ensure that new skills are continuously infused in leadership. Another concept that makes the trait approach of limited usefulness is that the concept of belief and morals is relative from one society to another. Therefore the approach does not consider a universal standard of measuring the qualities of a leader.

This works for the detriment of the approach, for instance, when other traits are considered immoral in Africa and quite moral in the west. This in essence shows that traits alone are not enough to define a leader. Other factors have to be considered for effective definition of a leader. Another demerit or limiting factor on this is that in the contemporary world it is very difficult to choose a leader focusing on his/her personal attributes since this will entail considering the diverse attributes of millions of people which will be a ridiculous thing or a difficult task to accomplish.

In addition there are some leaders who have stood out from the circles of only leadership and commanded people to follow their ideologies which sometimes might be very difficult to acknowledge, for instance, a leader for Al Qaeda movement Osama Bin Laden. What traits does he have that strongly enable him to hypnotize his followers to the extent of being suicide bombers? The traits apparently cannot be elucidated and thus shows that there is more than the traits, the colonizing of people's minds through maybe religious misinterpretations is the one that enables him to accomplish his mission.

This kind of leadership cannot be fully explained by the trait approach and thus the approach being limited. Behavior Approach The behavior approach on the other hand was researched on in the 1940s since the researchers wanted to find out the source of effective leadership. They considered behaviors of individuals since there was a belief that behaviors could be observed in an objective manner and measured (Handy 1993). They equally believed that behaviors could be measured. In this regards a researcher

(Kurt Lewin 1938) gave information that led to the basis of behavior approach of leadership.

In this he identified a range of leadership behaviors including democratic style, autocratic style and laissez-faire style. However there is no particular style that has been identified as the most effective in leadership and thus many managers and leaders use a mixture of these styles where appropriate or where the styles suit them. Therefore by the virtue of the proponents not able to establish the best style of leadership there shows that the behavior approach is limited to the forms of leadership, but this also emphasizes the fact that good leadership skills can be acquired or trained.

If for instance someone has good leadership traits but he/she is not trained on where to use the various leadership skills he/she is bound not to be a good leader. The behavior approach of leadership has the views in relation to motivation and can be categorized into two views known as theory X and theory Y. These developments were developed by Douglas McGregor and developed them as opposing views (Handy 1993). In theory X there it is characterized by inherent dislike of work by human beings in the expense of avoiding responsibility.

It further insinuates that the average human being has little ambition and needs security more than any other thing in the job or working environment.

According to this theory, people have to be forced to do their job by being controlled, directed and threatened with consequences that they might encounter due to failure to deliver, for instance penalties like salary cut and denial of allowances. All this is aimed at pushing the leaders of the

organization towards the organization's objectives and it might be argued that leaders also perform to their best since they know the consequences of failure in their job.

This approach is limited in this sense because it does not give a reason or a way or an alternative that the workers can intrinsically be motivated so that they do not work under fear of the penalties. It equally does not give the reasons why some leaders are just enthusiastic with their jobs and have an urge to continuously progressing by getting promotions. On the other hand theory Y holds the view that an average individual has the ability to learn in a favorable condition not only to accept but also to seek responsibility (Dodd: 1996).

It also does not advocate the fact that the external conditions are not only the means bringhard workthat will lead to the company's goals. Thus, this result to the kind of motivated leaders that is cautious of their work and the general objectives of the organization. Therefore there is the concept of intrinsic motivation that ought not to be neglected in this provision. This shows that leadership is acquired from the environmental set up that an individual lives up in.

A comparison of the two behavioral models show that the one which supports theory Y is more attracting to an organization and provides satisfaction both to the individual leader and the organization since a satisfied worker is bound to produce results in the organization. McGregor brings in a culmination of human behavior approaches in the discussion of the participative management style (Dodd: 1996). In this sense the employees are handled with lots of respect and valued. Failure to treat them

in a valuable manner might lead to rivalry between the employees with their leaders which might work to the detrimental of the organization.

In addition, in participative management the employees are given an avenue to participate at various levels of management in the organizations. Thus, skills in leaders enable them to give their followers opportunities to show their worthiness. Theory Z by William Ouchi partially agrees with the importance of participation as a motivating factor to employees (Vecchio: 1988). In this regards the employees ought to be part of decision making process for the organization to implement its projects successfully. Thus if the employees are participants in the decision making process they equally influence the way the organization is run.

This consequently leads to motivated employees who are ready to focus on the objectives of the company as a whole. This has limit in its usefulness because an individual might be motivated but fail to have the necessary skills to manage and administrate the organization. In essence this emphasizes the need of the leaders in an organization to ensure that their employees are participating in their respective levels of decision making. There is also perception in the behavior approach that shows that the sole motivating factor for a human being is to makemoney.

It perceives workers as money-motivated and maybe trivializes people as untrustworthy and irrational mass (Mullins: 2000). Though to some extent this is true because most incentives at many organizations are based on financial rewards. For instance executives of some successful companies have been known to take bonuses for the sole purpose of motivating themselves. On the other hand this view is limited since some employees

and leaders have the quest to have promotions without the urge of wanting a salary increment. Thus this cannot be explained by this theory.

Another perception is that of self actualization man which is equally important in considering leaders' behavior in an organization (Vecchio: 1988). This is seen when for instance individuals want to acquire positions by not necessarily wanting to get a pay rise. In various organizations this is tackled by supplying challenging tasks to the employees, providing purposeful focus in their jobs and providing that boost their self ego and thus self esteem. It is also important to note that this approach encourages the organization to focus on intrinsic motivation of leaders and employees rather than extrinsic motivation which most companies do.

Edgar Schein also considers the complexity of man. He shows that people are variable rather than complex. (Dodd: 1996). Thus according to the complexity of man, money does not always have an influence to people's decision or motivation. Another concept that comes along in this case is that due to individual's complexity, different people are bound to be motivated in different ways and therefore a thing that can motivate one person can be entirely disregarded by the other. In addition, the behavior approach embraces behavior modification mechanism which has some discrepancies (Greenbury: 1999).

In this case the mechanism to rectify behavior in an organization is aimed at the behavior, hence concentrating on the behavior overlooking the motive of the behavior and the factors which led to the behavior. This does not give the reason as to why people behave the way they do. Contingency Approach This approach takes into account the situational factor in leadership. A good

leader takes into consideration the situation in which he/she is in before making decisions. Contingency approach assumes that the effectiveness of the leader's personality, style and personality are contingent upon the requirement of the situation (Staw 1995).

This is crucial and true to some extent because the way a leader reacts to a situation reflects the gravity of the circumstance. A leader who builds a hill out of an anti-hill is not a good leader since he might end up causing unnecessary tension in the organization. It is also important to note that for this approach to work effectively there is the need for the leader to be able to integrate this with the other approaches and other forms of leadership. Leaders should either acquire traits to handle situation or be trained to handle various situations that they come across in the day to day running of their organization.

Therefore the decision of the leader entirely depend on some of the factors like how favorable is the leader to his/her followers. If the leader is favorable to the followers then he/ she easily handle an apparent grave situation. For instance, a favorable leader can easily approach a group of demonstrating employees and settle an otherwise angry mob. It takes a lot of wisdom for a leader who has been bestowed by enormous power to make decisions, especially to do with discipline. In such situations, leaders should be ready to rationally punish without bringing in their personal emotions about the particular employee.

Thus if a leader has a negative attitude towards an individual he might make irrational judgment about the person. The leader might also give favors to those who he is emotionally attached to thus compromising the quality of

work delivered by the individuals. This eventually affects the overall results of the organization. Situations arise inevitably in organization and they are handled effectively by the leaders according to how they react to them- this begs for the question; is the leaders attitude an inborn trait, acquired trait or trained.

Conclusion It is important to consider the concept of leadership in a holistic way because when judging a good leader all the parameters both for traits and behavioral are taken into consideration. Equally important is that the element of whether it is inborn, acquired or trained should also be taken into account. For leaders in an organization to be successful in their endeavors they ought to mix all the theoretical elements in making their decisions.

They should equally complement their strengths by synchronizing them with the various leadership styles they have been either trained on or acquired. The success of leaders entirely depends on how they interact with their followers in the organization. If they make the followers feel that they are part of the decision making process in the organization, then they are bound to be successful. Successful leaders also empower their followers. This is important because empowering employees ensures devolution of power of leadership from the center.

This eliminates the element of one man show in the organization. A great leader in essence is the one who knows when to lead and when to sit back; one who is ready to speak his mind and give others opportunity to speak their mind. It should be noted that quality leaders take into consideration the situation at hand. They know that their reaction to the situation has major implication both to the followers and the organization. To make situations

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easier for them to manage, successful managers ensure they have a good relationship with their employees.

This at greater length enables them to avert strikes and grievances which would affect the organization performance. Leadership should entail inspiring others to reach their potential by building a formidable team through praise and recognition and not consistently criticizing their efforts; but ensuring that all the tasks are done successfully. In addition, successful leaders should have the ability to hire the right people for each job; they know that people are their asset and therefore they motivate, develop and inspire each individual.

They also know that every individual is unique. Communication is an essential ingredient in leadership. Successful leaders ensure that they are not only consistent communication in the organization but also to all the stakeholders and shareholders. Therefore, communication has to be in all directions. When the lowest person in the organization rank is communicated to by the senior most authority in the organization, this person feels that he is appreciated and the gets motivate intrinsically. Quality leadership should have various skills of communication to their followers.

Timing in this case is essential, since the leaders should know when to use written notes, when to call a meeting and when to write memos. Good leadership also exposes their followers to meetings which the followers are allowed to give their suggestions and ask questions without being penalized. These skills are acquired during the working period of the leader or trained, and not in born. In addition, a strong leadership team has to be well

equipped with skills of management. They have to have financial literacy such that they can read the basics of financial reports.

Good leadership, in essence, cannot be attributed to only innateness or training of an individual. It requires other elements which can neither be inborn or trained but acquired through the working duration of the leader.

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