

# Reaction paper to article "a discursive approach to leadership"



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Discursive method in leadership studies This is a reaction paper to Clifton (2012)'s article A Discursive Approach to Leadership: Doing Assessments and Managing Organizational Meanings (Journal of Business Communication, p. 148 - 168). In the article, Clifton used his findings to contribute to the newly emerged approach in leadership research: the discursive approach.

Discursive leadership approach considers that the individuals with the most ability to influence the process of managing meanings in decision making naturally emerge as the leaders.

In order to explain how competing suggestions for future action are framed during these decision-talks, Clifton used discursive constructionist tool (DC) to provide fine-grain analyses of a monthly staff meeting. DC mainly deals with the way " reality" is constructed in the talks, and how it was organized in order to counter competing suggestions. Based on these analyses, the author provided us with four main observations: firstly, leadership does not necessarily correlate with organizational hierarchy.

Secondly, leadership is a constant flow; it can be shared or distributed amongst some or even all participants. Thirdly, leadership is not the " property" of any individual, but is open to challenge. Finally, as leadership is not a zero sum game, neither is followership: it was shown to be enacted during the conversation by participants surrendering their power to manage meanings.

These findings are very important, Clifton argued, because they prove that discursive resources are the key to the ability of influencing the management of meanings, and thus of leadership itself. From this, he advocates for stronger education in the power of talk, which is mistakenly

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often neglected. Discursive approach is, in my opinion, a very interesting approach to leadership, as earlier trends have only mainly looked at leaders from a macro point of view: actions and characteristics of a leader, etc.

The discursive approach, however, takes a micro point of view and examines the most mundane things: talk-in-interaction, and thus could provide very useful insights for practitioners. However the article isn't without drawbacks. Clifton has pointed out that despite being only a short part of one meeting, the case still has substantial importance, as it has demonstrated quite clearly how the meaning of the organization itself came into discursive existence during the negotiation process.

However, this is a rather basic research, and thus the conclusion can not be wholly justified without a more varied case samples from different background. Concerning the writing style in the article, the general impression is that it does not have a constant flow and could benefit from much improvements in both coherence and cohesiveness. This proves to be rather problematic and difficult at times for readers to understand the author's arguments and points, thus affecting the quality of the paper.