LEADERSHIP: CHARACTERISTICS AND THEORIES

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ABSTRACT
Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Leadership in education requires certain key attributes. A leader must set a direction; he must equip those he leads to go in the direction he sets; and he must design the organization he leads around instruction. This involves clear communication of his vision, wise investment of resources, focus upon the goal, development of relationships and reference to the evidences of success as they occur. Leadership strategically and effectively impact teaching, learning and class activity. The place and the persons involved have immense influence on his actions and his behavior as a leader. It is essential for the leaders to understand the context which they are leading. This article highlights the meaning of leadership, some of its characteristics and theories of leadership.

KEY WORDS: motivation, communication, judgment, participative, leadership.

INTRODUCTION
Leadership is the key to progress, success and survival of any group. It is the secret of the success of any organization, business enterprise, political or Governmental institution, religious congregation or an educational agency or institution. It is in particular an elusive but fascinating topic of continuing and abiding interest among students of educational and public administration. Nations have becomes what they are today and the world is today is largely because of leadership. The concept of leadership is a social notion. It emphasizes the interactional process involved in the achievement of goals. It was formally developed during 1960s to emphasize the ability of leader to influence the people in his organization in order to achieve the organizational goals. Religious leaders like Jesus Christ, Buddha, Confucius and so on has definitely affected and shaped the world’s cosmological, ethical and moral beliefs. Scientific leaders like Newton, Faraday, Copernicus, James Watt, the Bright brothers, George Stephenson, George Simon Ohm, etc, have largely been responsible for what the world is Today. Political leaders like Napoleon, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Hitler and so on, have largely been responsible not only for the present state of affairs in their respective nations but in the whole world at large. Social scientists and philosophers like Karl Marx, Hegel, Max Weber, Freud, Spinoza etc., have all helped to shape our social and political institutions, thoughts and beliefs and the educational leaders like Plato, Aristotle, Quintilian St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Comenius, Francis Bacon, Sigmund Freud, John Locke, Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Pestalozzi, Herbert, Froebel, John Dewey, Montessori and so on all are responsible for our present day educational thoughts, organisations, contents and processes.
MEANING AND DEFINITIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership in education requires certain key attributes. A leader must set a direction; he must equip those he leads to go in the direction he sets; and he must design the organization he leads around instruction. This involves clear communication of his vision, wise investment of resources, focus upon the goal, development of relationships and reference to the evidences of success as they occur. Good leaders are made not born. If we have the desire and will power, we can become an effective leader. Good leaders develop through a never ending process of self-study, education, training, and experience. Howard Gardner's Definition of Leadership writes, “A leader is an individual (or, rarely set of individuals) who significantly affects the thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors of a significant number of individuals”. Most acknowledged leaders are “direct”. They address their public face-to-face. But I have called attention to an unrecognized phenomenon: indirect leadership. In this variety of leading, individuals exert impact through the works that they create. Ralph M. Stogdill (1948) holds that leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an organized group towards goal setting and goal achievement. Gibbs E.H. Schein (1980) defines leadership as a function of the relationship between the leader, the followers and the task-situational characteristics. Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2007).

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERSHIP

1. Understanding Self: Effective leaders have an honest understanding of who they are and what they represent. Good leaders share their strengths with their followers and they seek input and support from their followers by acknowledging their weaknesses. In fact, followers truly will determine the effectiveness of leaders.

2. Understanding Human Nature: Effective leaders must have a fundamental understanding of human nature. Education leaders understand the needs, emotions, motivations, strengths, and weaknesses of their followers, namely, their entire building staff. Just as teachers work each and every day in their classrooms to grasp a comprehensive understanding of their students, so too do leaders in education regarding their followers, staff members. Understanding human nature is not an easy task. Every teacher, like every student, has a variety of needs depending upon the day and a kaleidoscope of emotions. All teachers are intrinsically motivated to do their best each and every day for their students. A simple, genuine acknowledgment of teacher’s efforts by their leaders goes a long way to building rapport, respect and responsibility with followers.

3. Communication: The most important trait of a leader is how effective that leader is in two-way communication. The receiver of the communication must clearly understand the exact information the sender is transmitting. Communication involves both verbal and non-verbal transmissions. When communicating effectively, leaders make consistent eye-contact and maintain a body posture that appears to be open to the message from the followers. As teachers, we all need to be trained as a team and communicated with as a team; we are working together to create opportunities for our students to be successful. Communication fails when barriers are placed in the context of the message. When the sender of the message is frequently perceived as being self-serving for self-preservation purposes the message will fall upon deaf ears. Another barrier that might prevent effective communication might be a gap in background or bias. For instance, if an educational leader who has never had experience working as a classroom teacher makes suggestions regarding classroom management or teaching methods, there may be limitations in effective communication. However, this type of educational leader could
Provide great insight on understanding human nature. Good leaders understand how to effectively communicate with their followers, verbally and non-verbally.

4. **Clear, Focused Judgment**: The best leaders effectively evaluated the situation, weighing needs, emotions, and motivation to get a feel for when to approach a teacher that needed more guidance and nurturing to be more effective. Leaders in education must have a clear, focused vision of success and have the capability to communicate that vision with the teachers that are in the trenches each and every day. Teachers begin to do their own things, hiding in their rooms because of the lack of trust that develops between leader and follower. A leader that understand when, where, and how to take action will be trusted.

5. **Believe in People**: that is true visionaries and communicates authentically will have followers take action toward that vision, own that vision and personify success. More people will be smiling, enjoying their work. It motivates me each and every day when my colleagues are in a good place within their work environment. Teachers that believe in the vision of the administration are positive and supportive of each other resulting in outstanding, authentic learning for students.

**THEORIES OF LEADERSHIP**

1) **Great Man Theory**
Great Man theory assumes that the capacity for leadership is inherent – that great leaders are born not made. These theories often portray great leaders as heroic, mythic and destined to rise to leadership when needed. The term ‘Great Man’ was used because, at the time, leadership was thought of primarily as a male quality, especially in terms of military leadership.

2) **Trait Theory**
Trait theory assumes that people inherit certain qualities and traits that make them better suited to leadership. Trait theory often identify particular personality trait shared by leaders. For example, traits like extraversion, self-confidence, and courage are all traits that could potentially be linked to great leaders.

3) **Behavioral Theories**
Behavioral theories of leadership are based upon the belief that great leaders are made, not born. Consider it the flip-side of the Great Man theories, rooted in behaviourism. This leadership theory focuses on the actions of leaders not on mental qualities or internal states. According to this theory, people can learn to become leaders through teaching and observation.

4) **Contingency Theory**
Contingency theory 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.

5) **Situational Theories**
Situational theories propose that leaders choose the best course of action based upon situational variables. Different styles of leadership may be more appropriate for certain types of decision-making. For example, in a situation, where the leader is the most knowledgeable and experienced member of a group, an authoritarian style might be most appropriate. In other instances where group members are skilled experts, a democratic style would be more effective.

6) **Participative Theories**
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.

7) Management Theories
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 rewards and punishments. Managerial theories are often used in business; when employees are successful, they are rewarded; when they fail, they are reprimanded or punished.

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

CONCLUSION
The importance of leadership in management of any educational organization can never be minimized. Achievement of organizational goals depends on how effectively leadership is exercised in the organization. This means that both high quality teaching and quality leadership are essential to successful education. Thus one must consider their combined operation. Leadership strategically and effectively impact teaching, learning and class activity. The place and the persons involved have immense influence on his actions and his behavior as a leader. It is essential for the leaders to understand the context which they are leading. Most leaders are aware of the professional environmental very early. School leaders try to understand how matters are conducted. They analyze cultural and social alienation, the procedures and running the school. The educational leader has to create a vision and establish directions, identify and formulate a vision, to create joint meaning and expectations of a high level of performance amongst members of the group, foster nurturing goals and the ability for follow up of the organization's performance. Leadership will not change if our approach will be random and unstable; we need a planned, gradual and cohesive approach of school leaders of today and tomorrow, who have professional knowledge, skills, professional and political acumen, distinction and analytical ability, as well as sensitivity.

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