EMERGING ISSUES IN LEADERSHIP

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Abstract: Leadership studies have gained increased importance during the last couple of decades, as has become more and more evident that leadership plays a crucial role and goes beyond pure employee productivity and organizational performance. Leaders and leadership in contemporary business are an important link in gaining and maintaining the much needed competitive edge and competitive advantage. The main rationale behind the paper is not simply an analysis of the role and importance of leadership, but rather top focus on emerging issues in the field of leadership, such as followership, replacements for leadership, leaders as coaches, gender and leadership.

Keywords: Leader, leadership, neutralizers of leadership, contemporary leadership

Introduction

One's first job is not likely to be a leadership position. We all start somewhere and that is typically in the production of an institution or company. During the course of life/career some touch upon leadership – either because they possess the competencies required to perform leadership or because they are top performers in production. Is it given that being the best specialist entails one will naturally perform as a leader?

The answer is highly dependent on the context. Leadership is by many considered to be a profession in itself and to become successful within this field it is not sufficient to rely solely on other professional competencies. On the other hand, many contexts entail that leaders need to understand the business to a certain detail level in order to conduct their mandate. Thus, it seems like finding the right balance within the given context is fundamental for delivering top performance as a leader. The question is then; how to find the right balance?

Indeed, many famous academics have come up with different qualities and practices that effective executives should possess, but arguably, leadership is not always about personality or talent. In fact, some of the best leaders display diverse strengths and attitudes, however, getting the right things done in the right way matters the most. Leadership, according to many scholars, must be understood as a process of unfolding, or in other words, a process of interlacing activities which lead in to the structuration of the hierarchical levels. What we experience as leadership, is discontinuous cycles of values of individuals which influence the values of the collective as a group – and in turn, ethics create behaviors and then they reciprocate. As a result, these collective values create the management and institutions which are in fact thought to meet the individuals' needs.

Without overstating the points made above about the quality and values in the process of the interlacing activities, there are some key concepts that help us define the nature of leadership as a process. Primarily, we must apprehend that leadership is not necessarily a job of the person in charge – meaning, it is a function of the collective will and needs of individuals organized to meet those various necessities. Second, the process of leadership is an exchange of the individual qualities, and adaptation and development. Third, leadership is a

process of energy, not structure (Barker, 1997) – which further proves the argument of leadership as a process of unfolding of the activities which lead to the creation of hierarchical levels.

We may as well conclude that leadership is different from management. The nature of leadership in its essence is deviation from convention – leadership is change, while management is all about pursuing stability. Leadership is when individuals understand what their own needs are, and pursuing them by joining a mutual group, motivates them to adapt their self-interest to shared goals. It is important to graspthe idea that there would be no leadership without a need for change, and although a leader symbolizes governance, it may not always be the source of it. In addition, the commitment to certain goals as well as the hierarchical structure can only be derived from the individual, not the chief in charge. The chief may without a doubt become an extra stimulus, however, no one works around the clock to make someone else rich. Leadership versus management is a theory in which Abraham Zaleznik is most famously known about.

Leadership and Followership

The topic of followership is a recent perspective in the field of leadership which focuses on how leaders are seen through the eyes of followers. Honestly speaking, there is an amazingly large and diverse literature that studies leadership, and regrettably the same cannot be stated about followership. This will surely need to change because leaders cannot exist without followers nor can followers exist without leaders. Experts all agree that these two concepts are highly correlated, and it basically means that neither can happen without the other. From the beginning of time, the encouragement of becoming a leader has always been greater than that of becoming an effective follower, and being a follower is seen as being mindless, a sheep and lacking in talent. Yet, leaders cannot cope without them, because the amount of support and influence followers provide on leaders shows up in the company's environment, daily. Their compliance is the image of a successful leadership in an organization. Likewise, increased follower effectiveness is mostly a fruition cultivated by a successful leader, therefore, leaders can only guide followers with their compliance. Throughout our lives, the shift between the roles will happen – some will lead during an earlier age and comply with a follower role later, whereas others will start with a follower role and become leaders after an experienced career. The key is for an organization to have people willing to play both roles with clear articulated strategies and requirements.

Books and web pages are flooded with various leadership styles and this part will provide a review of the styles of leadership through the perspective of followers. On the previous sections I have studied the many methods and types of leadership, which will now allow us to judge on what followers think of them. Afterwards, I will focus on three other key aspects of being an effective follower: types of followers, characteristics and the importance of cooperation between leaders and followers.

In their article "The Leader-Follower Relationship", Don Grayson and Ryan Speckhart write that "for everyone to try and lead or to innovate is a waste of resources. Most individuals and organizations would be best served by letting others, with more capabilities and resources, lead". (Grayson, Speckhart, 2006). Basically, for leaders to be successful in their approach, there must be someone who isn't willing to create a new model. Thus, a great challenge in becoming a leader is to distinguish between followers' abilities. Similarly, in becoming an effective follower, you have to learn how to become a good group member. Barbara Kellerman propose a hierarchy that clarifies how followers differ from one another (Kellerman, 2007).

Isolates: They do not care about their leaders, and land a job to only put forth the minimum amount of energy for their pay.

Bystanders: They have *low* internal motivation, and decide not to be involved but they are observing.

Participants: They are involved for or against the leader and invest some of their own time into the relationship in general.

Activists: They are considerably involved and willing to show their support or disapproval. They are visible and vocal about reaching the goals of the organization, or so persuaded that the organization is not doing alright.

Diehards: They bring strong individual and emotional qualities to their relationship. Always willing to do anything for their own cause, or willing to overthrow the leader if they think he/she is going on the wrong direction. There is a high level of intensity to their support or opposition.

As studied by Robert E. Kelley, effective followers share four crucial qualities (Kelley, 1998):

1. ***Self-management****:* the key to becoming an effective follower is to see yourself as being as talented as your leader.

2. ***Commitment****:* being committed beyond yourself.

3. ***Competence*** *and* ***focus****:* mastering your skills through training and development by focusing your efforts for maximum impact.

4. ***Courage****:* to fight for what you believe is right with your independent ideas.

This list is only illustrative since lots of other positive individual qualities would have strong effect in becoming an effective group member. Leaders cannot help a follower change his personality, however, they can take decisive actions in encouraging these qualities. Coaching and communication through feedback would support effective followership.

We may feel that collaboration does not deserve to make the list effective followership, however, the leader-follower rapport has changed significantly over the years. Followers do not approve any style of leadership that doesn't encourage communication. Well, not anymore. Nowadays, a key role for being an effective follower is to have good collaborative skills with your leader – because new styles of leadership all require a strong alliance between the leader and followers. Those who are led are not seen as tools to be used, they are seen as allies.

Alternatives to Leadership

Current theories, models and styles of leadership attempt to explain the impact of hierarchical structure upon the performance and satisfaction of the followers. Apart from the disagreements with one another in crucial aspects, these theories all share the same assumption that while the success of leadership styles varies from the situation, some types of leadership will be effective regardless of the situation. (Kerr, Jermier, 1987).

Furthermore, these contemporary theories and models in leadership have something else in common: a principle that acknowledges the great importance of hierarchical leadership. However, some individual, task and organizational characteristics act as the 'substitutes' for leadership, contradicting the superiority of hierarchical structure to exert impact over followers. In other situations, substitute factors may exist, but their effect neutralizes or negates the influence of the leader, even if the leader is trying to implement leadership.This section focuses on this current perspective on leadership and identifies these two alternatives: leadership supstitutes and leadership neutralizers.

As mentioned, leadership substitutes can be described as individual, task and organizational characteristics that tend to influence relationships between leader behavior and follower morale and performance. In other words, their impact on leadership outweighs the leader's ability to affect subordinates satisfaction and performance.1 This theory implies that followers will be able to execute their job efficiently without the direction of a leader when other factors are in play. Unlike traditional concepts, which strictly suggest that hierarchical leadership is always important, regardless of the situation, and that leadership substitutes may be irrelevant. (Manz, Sims, 1978).

Business theorists like Jermier and Kerr, also proposed neutralizers as alternatives to leadership, which in practice means that even if a leader attempts to get involved in leadership, the progression may render, negate or neutralize the process by various factors. In other words, a leadership neutralizer most often avoids a leader from executing actions to improve performance, or makes them irrelevant.

The Changing Nature of Leadership

Though the nature of leadership continues to evolve, some important degree of leadership will forever exist despite the various alternatives that keep developing. (Erickson, 2010).

This part focuses on the latest modifications in the study of leadership that executives should identify, such as the increasing role of leaders as coaches and gender & cross-cultural patterns of leader behavior. In addition, since there is no doubt that effective leadership has changed in the last decade, with it also indicating some new trends in leadership, the question now remains: how has leadership changed? What is contributing to this shift? What will the new leader look like? I argue about these issues in the following sections.

Leaders as Coaches

Contemporary forms of leadership today require the use of teams and many organizations are attempting to become less hierarchical – meaning, to run away from the traditional command and control mentality. That is, the role of leaders is also changing. If leaders used to be in total control of situations, make decisions and supervise work, nowadays it is asked from them to change their approach of managing people. Perhaps the best depiction of this new role is that the leader is becoming a coach instead of a supervisor. (Hackman, Wageman, 2005).

As an example, consider this from the standpoint of the coach of a football club. As a coach, he plays an important role in selecting the team, directing them during trainings and creating the formation during match days. Normally, coaches are also expected to develop player talent and help their players in executing the game plan. However, during match time, the coach stands on the sidelines and the players themselves are responsible for getting the job done, because after all, the coach is not the one to score any goals. Likewise, then, from the view point of an organizational leader, the coaching perception would ask for the leader to select followers, give them directions, train and develop new skills and help them in getting access to other information needed.

Women in Leadership

Obviously, one of the most discussed topics within the phenomena of leadership is the role of women. It is just another factor that is clearly changing the role of leadership, with the increasing number of women advancing to higher levels of management in organizations. Knowing that most leadership philosophies focus on male executives, investing in researches to better understand how female leaders lead is clearly the future of this study. Men and women apparently lead in different styles, and there are major differences in leadership as practiced by men and women. (Kent, Moss, 1994).

In contrast to the most popular stereotypes, female leaders are not realistically more supportive than male leaders, and likewise, male leaders are not really harsher and task focused than female leaders. The only difference that truly stands untouched is that females have an affinity with democracy in making decisions, whereas male leaders tend to be more autocratic, and this will never change. (Eagly et al, 1992). In attempting to explain this pattern, we understand that women simply tend to have stronger interpersonal skills than men, and as a result, they are capable of involving others in making decisions. The other conceivable explanation believes that women may encounter more stereotypic resistance to their occupying senior roles. (Morhead, Griffin, 2012). In this case, women may continuously work to intricate others in decision making processes, so as to minimize the occurrence of conflict or resentment. Therefore, the future research of leadership should focus on understanding the dynamics of gender and leadership, since many successful female leaders are indicating that women can be truly remarkable leaders.

Cross-cultural Leadership

Cross-cultural factors obviously are involved in the changing role of leadership as the workforces in organizations slowly become more and more diverse. Honestly speaking, most leadership research until several years ago has been conducted on examples involving white leaders –most leaders were white males. However, as African Americans and other members of different ethnic groups attained leadership positions, it may be obligatory to reevaluate how appropriate modern philosophies and models of leadership are when applied to a progressive increase of diverse range of leaders.

A serious potential issue in this context is also, religion. For instance, consider an Islamist leader leading a group of Christian or Jewish members. He will undoubtedly face difficult issues, which also means that the same issues

would be present if the roles were reversed. Fact is, cross-cultural issues may arise even when leaders and followers have less noticeable signs of diversity. A supervisor who has spent his complete career in, say, Texas, will probably face some regulation issues if given a leadership position in New York.

Triggering the Leadership Shift

The following six factors derive from tales and experiences collected through conversations with leaders around the world in a research that was conducted by Center for Creative Leadership in 2007. (Martin, 2007).

Shifting competition bases: some industries are immune to these shifts, such as those in technology which have a drastic impact on the market as a whole. Nowadays a major competitor of a firm can be a college graduate working from home.
Globalization: this needs no introduction, obviously, as it is the most common factor of changes in all studies. As we travel to learn what happens beyond our borders, we must hunt for to comprehending the new marketplaces before ever attempting to practice leadership within them.

Increased expectations: accomplishments are no longer measured on the basis of profits. We live in a time where the shareholders think about in terms of satisfying their expectations.

Drive for innovation: it is a little frightening indeed, to think of the speed of innovation nowadays. Companies struggle to know what's next, and need to be ready for the following great step even if they have just invested in a tremendous product that no one in the market can compete with.

Boundary Spanning Resulting from Mergers and Acquisitions: it is considered extremely difficult to create a mix of strengths of two different organizations so that you keep them alive in a new partnership.

Need for reinvention: There is a necessity for fresh business models that are more fitting for a different place and time.

Strategic Leadership

This concept explicitly relates to the role of leadership and that of top management. First, let's define strategic leadership. Strategic leadership is often seen as an extension to transformational leadership, because it is about transforming a company through vision, principles and other forms of structures and systems via its strategy. Strategic leadership understands complications of the organization and the market you compete, and focuses on achieving superior position between the market and the organization so as to lead change. In doing so, executives can establish clarity, strengthen connections and enlarge their leadership network, in order to contribute to their organization's well-being. However, while strategic and transformational leadership both contribute in the concept of change, the latter indirectly underscores the ability to lead change as the dominant focus. On the other hand, strategic leadership emphasizes the leader's ability to reason and function strategically. To achieve success in this role, an executive needs a firm grasp of the environment (trends and issues) and the organization he directs.

Ethical Leadership

The study of ethics in leadership is important because we gain a better understanding of moral, what leadership is and what it ought to be. It is basically a study of human relationships, therefore, some of the essential issues in ethics are also issues of leadership. In fact, research about charismatic, transformational and visionary leadership, hold ethics as an important part of their study. (Ciulla, 1998).

Scholars of leadership always preach about leaders as honest, people with integrity and so forth, and as an example, John Gardner in his book "On Leadership" (1987), categorizes the different types of bad leaders over the course of history. He explains that some leaders are cruel and some are destroyers of processes that others have previously have built with human dignity. (Gardner, 1987). However, he also offers a series of inspiring examples of leaders who are caring and serve for the common good. These two extremes only argue with the fact that most people have always presumed that best managers are ethical people. But with the examples of different corporate scandals, faith in top managers has had a strong negative impact. Therefore, this increasing issue of ethical conduct has raised standards for effective leadership. More specifically, top executives are required to reach and maintain high ethical standards. The emerging pressures of the behaviors of the great leaders,

increases obligation to hire leaders whose background has carefully been considered, hence, hold them more accountable than in the past for their actions and the consequences of those actions. Dirks, Ferrin, 2002).

Virtual Leadership

Currently, in the list of the most interesting topics in the study of leadership, you will find virtual leadership as well. The increasing practices of this form of leadership without a doubt creates issues and complexities as regards the effectiveness of leading an organization. Traditionally close personal interaction has dominated as the only way to lead and cooperate with followers, however, internet and the emerging of communication tools that come with it, organizations nowadays are becoming dispersed. Recent research exclusively focuses on understanding how leadership evolves in meeting the demand of the businesses. Some like to believe that virtual leadership is simpler, efficient and maybe even less expensive. Whereas the other group argues that it makes leadership more complex than the traditional leadership we all know.

To understand the basic idea behind the concept of virtual leaders, it is essential that you first get a grasp of idea of what distinguishes the virtual leader from that of a traditional leader, who in essence functions in a shared room or environment with his team members. (Zigurs, 2003). In the development of virtual teams, the role of the chosen leader is to simultaneously work in the development of these individuals so as to form a cohesive work unit with competences of self-management. To achieve this, virtual leaders are required to invest time in orienting their team in one common goal and shaping the mutual perceptions of the team mission. And then, once the required setting is formed, two leadership functions arise: performance management and team development. (Hunsaker, Hunsaker, 2008).

Another source claims that there are three roles in virtual leadership that stand alone from all the rest: the team liaison who is accountable for interpreting team events; the direction setter who guarantees that all activities have a identified purpose that is in line with the team's overall goal; and the third one is the operational coordinator role, which contains developing the right assets to challenge problems or tasks.

Conclusions and Recomendations

Without a doubt leadership is of immense importance for contemporary business organizations, a must in providing a competitive advantage in the modern "business jungle". As has been noted throughout the dissertation, leadership has been studied quite a lot at the international level and in most cases it has been analyzed as an inseparable part of each and every management situation, although leadership itself has much more to offer in terms of managing people and business organizations.

Although the principles of contemporary leadership is more apprehensive about the comfort of the followers, it is still a more subtle approach of ensuring ideal organizational performance, which hints in an attempt to acquire power. It is therefore agreed that leaders in the Pollog region must differentiate themselves from their employees, but through a more intricate leadership perspective. And as has been argued in many books and studies, followers react negatively to authoritarian leadership, given that people and societies are becoming more open-minded and cynical towards their bosses. This further illuminates a complexity of leadership in modern business, especially for the managers in this part of the country, where it is recommended that power should not be shared between the manager and the employee, but at the same time, leaders are not advised to practice autocratic leadership. Instead, they should work with admiration to the ideals that constitute good leadership in their own company.

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