

AN INTEGRATED MODEL OF TEAM LEADERSHIP FOR EMERGING ECONOMIES

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Abstract

Leadership is an area of study that dates back several decades with the emphasis placed on individual leaders particularly those in political and military fields. With the evolution of the practice of leadership and its application to organizations, the concept of team leadership gained attention. The main aim of the article is to outline a model for promoting team leadership in organizations with special emphasis on developing and emerging countries. A two stage qualitative research methodology was adopted involving collection and analysis of secondary published data for the purpose of identifying the main concepts and themes relating to leadership, followed by the integration of the most relevant concepts into the design of a team leadership model. The article is valuable as the creation of models to guide the leadership of teams are sparse especially with applications to developing-country contexts. There are implications for the management of organizations in most jurisdictions, but particularly countries where modern leadership practices lag behind best practices.

Keywords: Leadership theory, types of leadership, emerging leadership styles, team leadership; leadership models; leadership in organizations.

1. INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of the paper is to identify the key features of modern leadership thought and practice which can be utilized for designing a model of team leadership that emphasizes leadership as practice as a novel contribution. The question addressed is which features can be incorporated in a model fit for building team leadership relevant to developing-country contexts? The study of leadership is well established in the literature and dates back several decades as traced over three periods described by Yammarino (2013) as from antiquity to circa 1900, then 1900 to 2012, and to the current time of 2012 projected to 2025 based on future trends. The initial period studied leaders who were “renowned, prominent, or eminent individuals” including royalty, politicians, military leaders, and dictators while neglecting everyday leaders (Yammarino, 2013, p. 150). The second period witnessed the start of scholarly research on leadership which focused on definitions, importance of levels of analysis, the question of whether leaders were born or made, the role of antecedents to and consequences of leadership, and the issue of professional practice.

There is a significant body of research on the general issue of leadership but less work is available on the leadership of teams in business organizations, and very little on the practice of leadership in developing countries. The current and future trends indicate a need for more empirical studies, more explicit constructs, exploration of culture and leadership, investigation of the fundamental processes, greater recognition of contexts, and more analysis of leader-follower interaction rather than the focus on individual leaders. The model developed in this article is significant to managers and employees in business organizations, students of leadership, business schools, and policy officials. Further, the model is intended to address the gap in research on team leadership in business organizations and to contribute valuable insights into the practice of leadership which can act as a guide to prospective leaders. The sequence of the article follows with an overview of the literature on leadership, the theoretical background, the research methodology, a discussion of key concepts relating to modern leadership thought and practice that emerged from the research, the integrated team leadership model, and conclusions.

2. OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE ON LEADERSHIP

The approach to the literature review focuses on those aspects that are immediately relevant to leading teams or providing team leadership rather than the traditional discussion on leadership personalities and traits. In this regard, the review highlights the issues of the definition of teams, styles and types of teams, team leadership models, organization culture, and virtual teams. Several definitions of teams have been proposed and Northouse (2007) suggested that teams are organizational groups which display features of interdependence, goal sharing, and highly coordinated activities in order to achieve agreed goals. In simple language, a team comprises members who share common goals, trust one another, and are prepared to coordinate their actions in pursuance of agreed goals and objectives.

There is significant focus in the literature on leadership styles and types of teams based on studies by the universities of Ohio and Michigan. Northouse (2007) reviewed the literature on leadership styles indicating that the early Ohio studies revealed two general types of leader behavior, initiating structure and consideration. Initiating structure behaviors involved performing tasks such as organizing, structuring work context, defining roles and responsibilities, and scheduling activities. Consideration behaviors covered team building, cultivating respect and trust, and creating leader-follower friendship. The Michigan studies focused on employee orientation that deals with workers' personal needs, and production orientation that emphasizes the technical aspects of the job.

Regarding types of teams, six types of teams were identified based on the nature of the task to be performed and included project management teams, task forces, work units, standing committees, quality teams, and improvement teams (Northouse, 2007). An alternative perspective was to consider how teams were managed from which the following were observed: manager-led the traditional approach with the manager as the team leader; self-managing where the leader sets the goals but the team is free to apply appropriate methods; self-directing where the manager provides the organizational context, but the team determines the objectives and methods; and self-governing with the teams having responsibility for actual conduct of the assignment and performance results (Thompson, 2008).

Apart from research on leadership styles and types, different leadership models were explored. The best-known model is the Leadership Grid developed by Blake and Mouton (cited in Northouse, 2007) which considered two factors: concern for production and concern for people which closely parallel the task and relationship leadership behaviors identified in the Ohio and Michigan studies. The Leadership Grid defined five major leadership styles: authority compliance, country club management, impoverished management, middle-of-the-road management, and team management (Northouse, 2007). These styles led to discussion of the situational contexts leaders encounter which were described as the Situation Leadership 11 model; and the development levels of employees presented as a continuum reflecting degrees of competence and commitment. In order to distil the research on models of leadership, an integrated model of teamwork was formulated with the aim of improving team effectiveness (Thompson, 2008). The model highlighted team context, essential conditions, and team performance which led to consideration of organizational structure and design, information systems, policy framework, team composition and culture, communication patterns, and training.

The impact of organization culture is a critical consideration in leading teams because teams do not operate in a vacuum but are subject to the cultural ethos within a particular organization. Organization culture was defined as "a cognitive framework consisting of assumptions and values shared by organization members" (Greenberg, 2005, p. 394). A cognitive framework refers to the way in which our mind integrates and interprets information, while values refer to stable, long-term beliefs about important matters. The author acknowledged that there were widespread differences in organizational culture and observed the vital functions of organizational culture as: providing a sense of identity for members, generating commitment to the organization, and clarifying and reinforcing standards of behavior. In this context, the types of organizational cultures were identified as: hierarchy culture which describes organizations with an internal focus that emphasizes stability and control; market culture which, apart from stability and control, describes organizations that focus on competitiveness, productivity, and the bottom line; clan culture which identifies organizations with a strong internal focus but with a high degree of flexibility and discretion, which make them feel like extended families; and adhocracy culture

which emphasizes flexibility and a focus on the external environment including the need for innovation and futuristic thinking, as the means for securing survival and growth (Greenberg, 2005).

In summary, it was noted that, with increasing interest in leadership research and practice, the concept of leadership has become overused, fragmented, and with researchers holding contradictory positions (Raelin, 2016; Alvesson & Jonsson, 2018). This fragmentation has introduced new perspectives described as emerging forms of leadership such as transformational, ethical, authentic, and servant leadership (Hoch, Bommer, & Dulebohm, 2018) and concepts of shared and distributed leadership, virtual teams, creativity, and sustainable entrepreneurial leadership detailed in a subsequent section. These emerging forms of leadership behavior constitute the core of the discussion on leadership and the elements integrated into the team leadership model presented in the article.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The early theoretical perspectives on leadership focused largely on concepts of transactional leaders whose leadership was based on offering rewards in return for desired efforts, and transformational leaders who related to followers on an emotional level providing inspirational, and intellectual stimulation, while acting as mentors to develop followers' potential (Böttcher, Albrecht, Venz, & Felfe, 2018). The application of theoretical perspectives to leadership evolved into several considerations including the heroic leader, traits, situational, behavioral, and contingency theory which suggested that a leadership style should suit the particular context and environment (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015; Buzdar & Fatima, 2018). More recently, the concept of critical leadership studies is emerging as a means of providing a wider understanding of leadership complexities while promoting new analytical and innovative approaches (Collinson, 2011).

Against this theoretical background, this paper is underpinned by the emerging theory of 'leadership-as-practice' which sees leadership as evolving through day-to-day experience and offers an alternative perspective to the conventional view of leadership which is consumed with exploring the relationship between leaders and followers (Raelin, 2017). Leadership as practice focuses on the development of leadership in everyday operations and is based on a collective approach that accommodates related concepts of distributed, shared, and collaborative leadership rather the preoccupation with the individual leader (Alvehus, 2019). This theory is still developing and therefore, remains flexible and open to input from researchers, readers, and participants in the process, and therefore fits the aim of this paper to design a leadership model based on the team approach.

4. METHODOLOGY

The research method involved a two-stage sequential process which comprised a secondary data collection and analysis stage, followed by a leadership model-building stage through the application of the relevant concepts. The data from secondary research sources were sourced from journal articles downloaded from the leading digital full-text aggregator databases ABI/INFORM ProQuest and EBSCOhost, and reputable texts related to the subject matter accessed from libraries and the Internet. The data were sorted, coded and subjected to a thematic analysis for identifying the key concepts and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with the results providing a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the complex area of leadership studies. The second stage involved the design of a team leadership model which was the result of the identification of the leadership styles and practices that were most relevant to leading teams and the application of the accumulated leadership experience of the author gained from the practice of organizational leadership in a developing-country environment over a period of 40 years. Consistent with acknowledged qualitative procedures, the research method involved: the researcher as the key instrument for conducting the research; multiple sources of data obtained from peer reviewed journals, and texts; a theoretical lens which sought to identify the social and political context of the issues studied, and represented a holistic account to better reflect the complex picture of the study elements (Creswell, 2009).

5. KEY LEADERSHIP CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES

The concept of leadership has expanded considerably beyond the early debate about transformational and transactional leadership styles. With the continuing evolution of the concept, certain leader-types were observed including an extended transformational style that was closely linked to authentic, ethical, shared, and servant styles which were considered as emerging from the practice of leadership in different contexts (Carter & Greer, 2013). To these styles were added the organizational imperatives of adopting an entrepreneurial leadership style, consistent with the theory of leadership as practice, promoting creativity in organizations, and developing the capacity for leading virtual teams. The discussion that follows provides an elaboration of these emerging leadership styles and practices which comprise the key components of the design of an integrated team leadership model appropriate to developing-country situations as the main contribution of the article.

5.1. Transformational and charismatic leadership

The most pervasive concept regarding the issue of organizational leadership is that of the transformational leader whose style is viewed as more people-centered than the transactional style that focuses on the exchanges between leaders and followers. As such transformational leadership was described as “the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and follower” (Northouse, 2007, p. 176). This leadership style is therefore, mutually reinforcing by rewarding both leaders and followers. There is a clear overlapping among the emerging concepts of leadership mentioned above which can be viewed as extending the transformational concept as suggested by Hoch et al. (2018). Although the transformational leader is held up as the most desirable and likely to be effective, no single, universally applicable style of leadership exists, therefore, it was concluded that team leaders needed to adapt their styles to the organizational context, situations, and team compositions (Amanchukwu et al., 2015).

It was argued that the overriding factor in the achievement by leaders of outstanding team effectiveness is the practice of transformational leadership, and this leadership style is closely linked to the concept of charisma with its focus on emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals (Northouse, 2007). The transformational leadership style also includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as human beings not lesser mortals. Northouse succinctly described transformational leadership as “the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and follower” (p. 176). The personality of a charismatic leader was described by Northouse as: “dominant, having desire to influence others, being self-confident, and having a strong sense of one’s own moral values” (p. 178). Insofar as the issue of charismatic versus transformational leaders is concerned, McLaurin and Al Amri (2008) compared charismatic and transformational leaders and suggested that transformational leaders stimulate interest, influence new perspectives, and urge followers to greater achievements through empowerment and acting as role models and change agents. A common observation is that transformational leaders espouse and demonstrate honesty, integrity, and morality which are becoming indispensable conditions for operating in the current business environment, and are therefore integral to team effectiveness. More recent evidence demonstrated that transformational leadership enhances collaboration among team members and teamwork quality irrespective of team diversity, gender composition, functions, and organizational experience (Cha, Kim, Lee, & Bachrach, 2015). Further, transformational leadership was seen as positively encouraging trust in team leaders and members which makes a significant contribution to team effectiveness and performance (Chou, Lin, Chang, & Chuang, 2013).

5.2. Authentic and caring leadership

As an emerging style authentic leadership is relatively new and is related to concepts of organization behavior, ethical leadership, and transformational leadership style (Baron & Parent, 2015). Thus, it can be argued that authentic leadership may not be considered a leadership style but a leadership characteristic that strengthens the transformational style (Alavi & Gill, 2017). However, authentic leaders were viewed as displaying characteristics of positive moral behavior; great self-awareness; balanced decision-making approaches; transparent conduct; and positive psychological capital (Allahar, 2019). It was also posited that authentic

leaders fostered individual creativity and team innovation in organizational settings leading to performance improvements (Černe, Jaklič, & Škerlavaj, 2013; Xu, Zhao, Li, & Lin, 2017). The concept of authenticity is linked to organization performance, employee satisfaction, trust in leadership, and organization commitment (Carter & Greer, 2013). The concept of caring leadership is integrally linked to authenticity, but it was observed that many leaders do not demonstrate a caring attitude. However, it was argued that great leaders build close relationships with followers and yet maintain objectivity in decision making, which reinforces the trust of employees by conveying a caring, compassionate culture that cultivates clarity and focuses on performance (Nye, 2009). The notion of caring leaders is gaining attention in the literature with the qualities of caring leaders associated with authentic, ethical, and servant leaders such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King (Mahembe & Engelbrecht, 2014; Gabriel, 2015).

5.3. Ethical leadership

Interest in ethical leadership became important when issues arose about the unethical behavior of major corporations threatened the financial system and was considered a growing trend in corrupt behavior (Liu, 2017). Ethical leaders were seen as honest, trustworthy, and caring persons who establish clear ethical standards, act as role models, and demand ethical behavior from employees (Chughtai, 2016). The application of ethical behavior to business organizations has evolved into the question of ethical stewardship as a preferred business model (Caldwell, Hayes, Karri, & Bernal, 2008). Ethics in organizations was viewed as an ongoing process of debate and contestation over moral choices and should be viewed as practice because such a perspective would allow for a theoretical approach which examines how ethics are enacted in practice and how they constitute work (Clegg, Kornberger, & Rhodes, 2007). There is a common view that ethics has no place in business, but it was suggested that managers have a moral duty to seize opportunities to create a climate in which ethical behavior is integrated into members' behavior and the day-to-day operations of organizations (Geva, 2006).

5.4. Shared leadership

Shared leadership is one of the emerging leadership styles which is also referred to as distributed, dispersed, or collective leadership by researchers. The leadership style implies that tasks are discussed by groups and agreement reached on the division of the responsibilities for completing the assignment by members who act as leaders, rather than by one influential person. This form of leadership became popular with the new focus on teamwork and participative decision-making in organizations arising from the increased complexity of work, the changing workplace, and the competitive environment (Barnett & Weidenfeller, 2016). In this work context, it was argued that no individual leader "will possess the capability and competence to understand, solve, and improve leadership problems in order to achieve effective team outcomes" (Konradt, 2014, p. 290). In general, the evidence is that sharing leadership positively impacts team performance especially in project teams where members feel empowered (Grille, Schulte, & Kauffeld, 2015).

5.5. Servant leadership

The concept of servant leadership is aligned to caring and ethical leadership behavior and ethical stewardship, and contributes to people empowerment through training and knowledge sharing (van Dierendonck, 2011). In such an environment, employee needs are assigned priority and servant leadership was viewed as a transformational initiative which creates a more caring and just society (Beck, 2014). Servant leadership was shown to be positively linked to team effectiveness (Carter & Greer, 2013).

5.6. Entrepreneurial leadership

Entrepreneurial behavior came to be viewed as another form of leadership which was demanded because of radical changes in the workplace (Fernald, Solomon, & Tarabishy, 2005). These authors found that the similarities between entrepreneurs and leaders were considerable, and projected that the organization of the future would display entrepreneurial leadership comprising: "strategic leadership (vision and long-term goals); problem-solving skills; timely decision-making; a willingness to accept risks; and good negotiating skills"

(Fernald et al., 2005, p. 5). The concept of entrepreneurial leadership has emerged as a new paradigm which represents a convergence of leadership and entrepreneurship which provides critical insight into the performance of individuals in complex organizational settings (Harrison, Burnard, & Paul, 2018). The paradigm was extended to consider entrepreneurial leadership as distinctive from most forms of leadership in that it can be applied in new small and medium enterprises within competitive and changing environments, rather than in large corporations exclusively (Leitch & Volery, 2017). Thus it was contended that entrepreneurial leaders must be confident but also be “open to information, insights, and observation from others” while feeling a sense of stewardship and striving to secure organizational viability (Schoemaker, Heaton, & Teece, 2018, p. 13). In this context, the concept of sustainable leadership was discussed in relation to the promotion of sustainable development (Donkor & Dongmei, 2018). The concept was further extended to the practice of sustainable entrepreneurship leadership for which a process model was designed for application to emerging economies because of the model's development orientation (Allahar, 2019).

5.7. Fostering team creativity and innovation

The concept of creativity has progressed beyond a concentration on individual action and now fully integrated into modern organizations in the form of team creativity and innovation. Research on team creativity is evolving and the key elements were emphasized as: team diversity, applicable skills, operational positions, and knowledge base; team management and self-management, leadership style, organizational support, support for innovation, and feedback mechanisms; team culture and organization climate, a sense of belonging and commitment, and positive attitudes; and mechanisms for enhancing group creativity (Blomberg, Kallio, & Pohjanpää, 2017). It was earlier established that the team leader has a developmental responsibility to train the team in the skills and techniques of effective thinking, as well as broad educational pursuits, and to convince members that the innovative organization of tomorrow is “a community of creativity” (Adair, 1996, p. 182). Finally, the team leader must overcome obstacles to creativity and innovation by being an innovative leader and manager, being supportive, delaying evaluation, and persuading managerial colleagues to do the same (Adair, 1996). More recently, a framework was developed aimed at fostering creativity and sustainability in organizations through incorporating a high-performance culture, stimulating team creativity, and promoting organizational innovation (Allahar, 2018). This framework can serve as a guide to organizational leaders in developing creativity and innovation as a means of addressing the complex challenges of the modern environment.

5.8. Leading virtual teams

In a modern organizational context, the operations of companies now span regional and international borders which lead to the development of virtual teams defined as individuals collaborating in geographically dispersed work-groups that may reside in different time zones and countries (Horwitz, Bravington & Silvis, 2006). The implication for team leadership is the changing role of the leader which showed that with the evolution of the team, the leader's role moved from being that of an advocate, in the team formation stage, to that of a catalyst at the intermediate stage; and finally, that of an integrator when the team had reached a more mature stage in its development. Thus, the leadership of virtual teams is now a critical skill in the globalized business environment although considered more difficult than face-to-face teams; and to reduce the difficulty, it was suggested that the leadership functions be supported by rewards and incentives, transformational leadership, and adopting a shared approach (Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014). It follows that the leadership of virtual teams is important in assisting teams to address barriers and obstacles and to adapt to operational challenges (Gilson, Maynard, Young, Vartianen, & Hakonen, 2015). The operations of virtual teams are driven by communications technology and effective team leadership is vital to effective performance. In this context, it was suggested that a transformational leadership style was most beneficial to achieving team objectives and project success; and leaders must stress the leadership competencies unique to a virtual environment (Maduka, Edwards, Greenwood, Osborne, & Babatunde, 2018).

6. INTEGRATED TEAM LEADERSHIP MODEL

Few researchers have paid attention to developing a model of leadership with particular relevance to organizations in developing-country contexts. While this paper accepts that most of the general principles of leadership can be applied to the majority of countries in the world, the argument presented here is that leadership in developing situations is even more critical because of their heightened vulnerability to the global megatrends and the economic and environmental forces at play (Harrison et al., 2018). The model proposed in this article (Figure 1) represents the distillation of accumulated research and findings on the issues of leadership, team leadership, and the applied experience of the author based on performance in varied leadership positions.

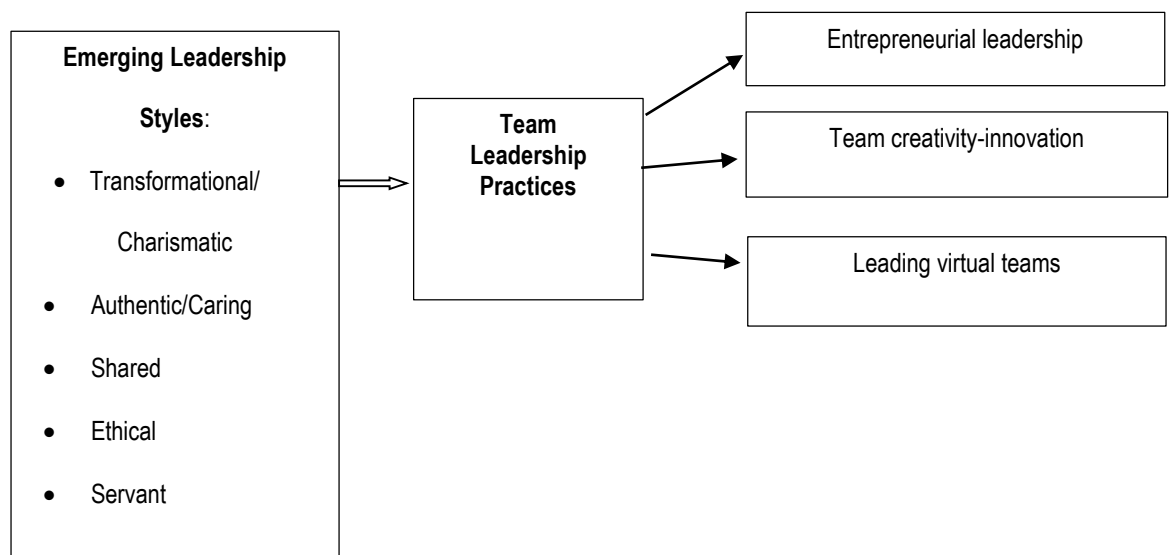


FIGURE 1 - AN INTEGRATED TEAM LEADERSHIP MODEL

The model design demonstrates the shift from the conventional vertical leadership style to a lateral approach that emphasizes shared and collaborative leadership. This shift also acknowledges the complex dynamics of modern organizations that operate in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments that demand entrepreneurial leadership, creative and innovative action, and new business models to meet the challenges of the new world (Schoemaker et al., 2018).

The model integrates the specific emerging leadership styles and team leadership practices identified from the research discussed in this article. The specific styles selected are the transformational/charismatic style which was extended to incorporate the authentic/caring, shared, ethical, and servant leadership styles relevant to modern organizational practices. The team practices highlighted in the model focus on entrepreneurial leadership, team creativity and innovation, and leading virtual teams which specifically target the challenge of developing team leadership in developing-country organizations. Entrepreneurial leadership is geared to problem solving and performance improvement through enhancing technical/business competences, and conceptual, interpersonal, and entrepreneurial skills (Harrison et al., 2018). Team creativity and innovation are vital functions of organizational and are indispensable to the sustainability of any modern organization, and particularly applicable in the case of organizations operating in developing-country settings (Donkor & Dongmei, 2018). Virtual teams are a growing phenomenon with the spread of global operations, and the creation of such teams add to the complexity of leadership in a volatile world.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The article set out to explore the concept of leadership with special emphasis on team leadership which was considered a relatively new area of research because of the traditional focus on individual leaders. The practice of transformational leadership was determined to be the superior style in achieving high team performance in organizations. With the evolution of leadership types, it was observed that the concept of transformational

leadership was being extended to include aspects of authentic and caring, shared, ethical, and servant leadership practices. The article incorporates these leadership concepts into the design of a team leadership model that integrates the extended transformational leadership style with concepts of entrepreneurial leadership, team creativity and innovation, and leading virtual teams. It is concluded that this model can serve organizations in multiple jurisdictions but is particularly applicable to organizations based in developing countries.

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