

Literature Review: Ben Rigney, 2017

Leadership Theory

Leadership is an important subject to analyze (Burns, 1978; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Mohler, 2012; Shein, 2010). Researchers have found that leadership has been incredibly valuable throughout human history (Ray, 2013; Stone & Patterson, 2005; Strauss, 2013). Stone and Patterson (2005) showed the value of leadership throughout human history when they observed, “Leadership, and the study of it, has roots in the beginning of civilization. Egyptian rulers, Greek heroes, and biblical patriarchs all have one thing in common—leadership” (p.1). Leadership, as an academic field, continues to grow and develop (Lussier & Achua, 2014; Mohler, 2012; Robertson & Timperley, 2011).

The study of leadership not only explains the phenomenon of leadership but also explains how to be a successful leader (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2014; Lussier & Achua, 2014). Researchers in the field of leadership have affirmed leadership as a developable skill (Grandzol, 2008; Iszatt-White & Sanders, 2014; Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2013). Leadership is essential to the success of any organization. Just as the absence of leadership is damning to an organization, the presence of quality leadership can make an organization successful (Adams, 2010; Akuoko, 2012; Goetsch, 2011; Perkins, 2014; Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1986).

Evolution of Leadership Theory

Different leadership theories cite different sources for successful leadership, creating unique paradigms for analyzing leadership theory. Lussier & Achua, (2014) stated, “A leadership paradigm is a shared mindset that represents a fundamental way of thinking about, perceiving, studying, researching, and understanding leadership” (p. 16). The various leadership theories

suggest either leadership is a trait a leader is born with or a leader can develop his or her leadership skills. The trait approach suggests some people were born leaders and others are born to be followers (Carlyle, 1849; Dowd, 1936; Judge, et al, 2002). The skills approach suggests a leader can be developed through intentionally working at his or her craft (Kouzes & Posner, 2009; Gill, 2011, Wren, 2013).

The early stages of leadership research focused on the innate abilities of the leader. Carlyle (1840) proposed, “The history of the world is but the biography of great men” (p. 26). The thought of history as being controlled exclusively by those born great contributed to the idea of leadership being a trait a leader is born with and followers are born without. While trait leadership theory remains a topic of study it has become increasingly unpopular among leadership scholars (Lussier & Achua, 2014). Stodgill (1948) found leadership to be derived from a leader’s “Capacity, achievement, responsibility, participation, and status” (p. 64). As the field of research has developed the support of trait theory has waned considerably with much of the current research focused on the combination of the trait and contingency theories of leadership (Daft, 2011).

As researchers continued to critique the theory of trait leadership, the theory of skill or behavioral leadership emerged. Katz (1974) suggested leadership was a skill, and skills are inherently developable. The skill theory suggests a leader is successful based on performance, not on any predisposition or innate characteristic; a leader can be successful through the development of skills (Beh, 2012; Gill 2011; Grandzol, 2008; Wren, 2013).

Additionally, relational leadership theory explores a developable skill for a leader as he or she related to his or her followers (Daft, 2011). This theory views leadership is a relationship of

influence (Fore, 2012; Gilbert, 2012). Ray (2013) defined leadership as, “A sustained process that helps an individual to derive desired results with the help of his or her followers, superiors, subordinates, and peers and deliver optimum performance for the well being of the society and world at large” (p. 3). Leadership is a process of influence, which exists in the context of a relationship with other people.

Transformational Leadership

One important theory of leadership is transformational leadership (Boateng, 2014; Riaz, 2012). Transformational leadership is considered to be a developable skill; therefore, a leader can increase his or her abilities to lead in a transformational manner (Bass, 1990; Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2013). Day (2014) summarized transformational leadership when he wrote, “Transforming leadership... is based on the principle of raising the consciousness of followers to a higher moral plane and encouraging them to aspire to high ethical standards” (p. 228). Transformational leadership is best understood as the relationship between the leader and his or her followers (Hawkins, 2014; Himelhoch, 2014; Hollander, 2009).

Because transformational leadership focuses on the relationship between the leader and the follower, the leader does not operate merely to accomplish the necessary tasks for an organization to be successful (Shelton, 2012). Rather, transformational leaders work for the benefit of the organization and the followers themselves (Hawkins, 2014; Himelhoch, 2014; Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2013). Transformational leadership espouses the idea that a leader needs a healthy relationship with his or her followers as well as an understanding of the needs of the followers (Goleman, et al, 2013; Hollander, 2009). Himelhoch (2014) wrote, “Followers of transformational leaders trust, admire, and respect their leaders; employees are more loyal and

apt to exhibit organizational citizenship behaviors. The leader caters to employees' highest order needs" (pp. 11-12). A relational understanding is critical to transformational leadership.

According to transformational leadership theory, a leader needs to lead for the well being of the organization and the followers. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2013) suggested, "The primal job of leadership is emotional" (p. xi). At its essence, transformational leadership insists a leader treat his or her followers well in order to do what is best for the organization (Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2013). Taking care of the emotions of the people within an organization make it beneficial to the organization itself (DuBrin, 2016; Evans, 2012). By investing in the people of the organization, a leader can successfully guide the entire organization (MacArthur, 2004; Hollander, 2009).

The antithesis of transformational leadership is transactional leadership. Transactional leadership is focused on the practical elements of organizational objectives, whereas transformational leadership considers the needs of the followers (Ferry, 2010). Transactional leadership has been shown to be critical to organizational change on a practical level, which underscores the need for transactional leadership in the appropriate context (Golm, 2009; Belasen, 2012). Transformational leadership has also been shown to be a valuable tool for creating organizational change (Belasen, 2012; Fisher, 2006; Golm, 2009; Spreitzer, Perttula, & Xin, 2005). Verhoye (2015) identified transformational leadership as an important and obvious characteristic aiding Pope Francis' implementation of change in the Roman Catholic Church. However, researchers in the field of education found little correlation between transformational leadership and organizational change in an educational context (Fisher, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2015; Griffith, 2010).

Kouzes and Posner (2007) suggested the best leadership is transformational and takes the needs of the followers into account when a leader is making decisions. However, Lynch (2012) concluded that transformational and transactional leadership styles are complementary. Transactional and transformational leadership both serve a purpose in an organization (Canty, 2005; Ferry, 2010). Mehrabani and Mohamad (2013) concluded, “Extra effort, effectiveness, and satisfaction are by-products from leaders who supplement transactional with transformational leadership” (p. 830). However, transformational leadership is the more favored approach among many leadership theory scholars (Burns 1978; Goleman, et al, 2013; Kouzes & Posner, 2009; Northouse, 2013).

A leader needs to develop his or her skill to lead people in a transformational manner (Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2013). An individual can develop the skills necessary to be an effective transformational leader (Loughead, Mawn, Hardy, & Munroe-Chandler, 2014; Osborne, 2011). Increased spiritual practices are one way for a leader to become a better transformational leader (Patsko, 2016; Riaz, 2012). According to a study of educational administrators in South Florida, Riaz (2012) concluded, “Spirituality is positively related to an individual’s transformational leadership behaviors” (p. 64). Additionally, being mentored by a more experienced leader is an effective way to develop transformational leadership skills (Winkler & Marshall, 2017). According to a study of the transformational leadership of community college presidents in North Carolina, Marshall (2012) concluded that mentoring is “a vital part of leadership development” (p. 90). Research has shown that it is critically important for a leader to develop his or her transformational leadership behaviors in order to benefit the organization that he or she leads (Jauhari, Singh, & Kumar, 2017).

Additional research is needed to continue to learn more about transformational leadership (Golm, 2009; Vardaman, 2013). Sãenz (2011) suggested, “There is still a marked tendency to recycle the same methodological approach over and over again in the study of transformational leadership. There is no shortage of interesting avenues of inquiry, however” (p. 308). There is a need for more research in regards to transformational leadership, and there are many interesting ideas still unexplored.

Leadership Performance

The process of leadership requires a person to perform the duties of a leader (McCrea, 2015). Leadership is universal in nature; every element of society experiences some form of leadership hierarchy wherein one person exerts influence over another (Hogan & Benson, 2009). People lead by exerting influence, and people in any position and organization have the capability of influencing others (Gilbert, 2012; McCrea, 2015; Moody, 2011).

An individual who is performing as a leader is not required to carry a formal leadership title (Gmelch & Buller, 2015; Keohane, 2010; MacDonald, 2013). However, even though titles are unnecessary, most leaders do have formal titles and role designations (Runde & Flanagan, 2012). Despite the commonality of formal role designations, leadership is ultimately not dependent on titles or formally defined roles; rather, it is defined by performance (Gilbert, 2012; Joshi, Erbm, Zhang, & Sikka, 2016; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013).

Leadership Development

Leadership is vitally important and needs to be developed (Johnson, 2012; Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2013; Smith, 2010). The development of leaders will provide a benefit to both the leader and the organization (Beh, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2009; Lussier & Achua, 2014; Lopez-

Gonzalez, 2012). Lopez-Gonzalez (2012) concluded, “The single most important component in achieving organizational success was the offering of a leadership development program” (p. 1). Because leadership is a learned skill, it can be done well or it can be done poorly (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2014; Johnson, 2012). Leadership is not dependent on any condition beyond the control of the leader, which enables the leader to continually improve his or her abilities (Goleman, et al, 2013; Kouzes & Posner, 2009; Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2013).

Education and intentional training are critical to the development and subsequent success of a leader (Diew, 2012; Dockery, 2008; Lawson, 2008). Bell (2004) suggested, “To become an extraordinary leader, you must build your own personality skills. This comes first. You must be what you want your followers to become... Effective leaders build themselves fundamentally. They develop healthy personality characteristics” (p. 25). A leader needs to learn the necessary skills to effectively lead his or her organization (Beh, 2012; Bell, 2004; Lund, 2013). The development of leaders needs to be intentional and strategic (Murrell & Murrell, 2016). Beh (2012) studied leadership development in Christian churches and concluded, “Leadership development needs to be intentional” (p. 120). Lund (2013) found organizational failures would be best avoided by formally implementing leadership development training through existing systems.

Developing leaders is important both for the success of the organization and for the success of the individuals involved (Lawson, 2008; Ong, 2013). The development of capable and effective leaders greatly benefits an organization. Avolio and Gardner (2005) wrote, “In these challenging and turbulent times, there is a growing recognition among scholars and practitioners alike that a more authentic leadership development strategy becomes relevant and urgently

needed for desirable outcomes” (p. 316). Leadership development is an essential element to meeting the need for capable leaders, which will aid the organizations being led (Diew, 2012; Lopez-Gonzalez, 2012).

Formal Academic Leadership Programs

The importance of leadership development is evidenced by the emergence of leadership studies as a viable academic discipline (Bonebright, 2014; Mohler, 2012; Yazdana, 2014). Riggio (2011), during his evaluation of the merit of leadership studies as an academic field, stated, “Leadership is an emerging discipline that will continue to grow and develop, and ultimately receive academic recognition... leadership is such an important topic that leadership studies will become a distinct and recognized discipline” (p. 18). Academic institutions are becoming more involved with the study of leadership as an academic field, and the application of effective leadership (Bonebright, 2014; Hackman & Johnson, 2013; Mohler, 2012).

One of the ways institutions are focusing on leadership is by studying leadership in a purely academic capacity (Anderson, 2012; Smith, 2010; Yazdana, 2014). Leadership is an evolving academic discipline (Day & Antonkis, 2012; Riggio, 2011). Many schools are incorporating the study of leadership into other academic disciplines such as education or business, while other schools are creating unique programs of study exclusively devoted to leadership (Riggio, 2011). Formal programs of leadership continue to be established, such as the University of San Diego, which became the first university in the United States to offer a doctoral program in leadership studies (SanDiego.edu).

In addition to the study of leadership theory, leadership development programs are also being implemented in academic institutions (Holt, 2011; Sherman, 2008; Smith, 2010).

Leadership development programs are needed to properly train individuals to become effective leaders (Lyman, 2011; Bornheimer, 2010). Phillips, Phillips, & Ray (2015) concluded, “There will always be a need for a structured process for developing leaders” (p. 7). Some vocal critics have called for the abolishment of formal leadership education (Levine, 2005), but research has shown formal leadership programs to be beneficial (Bonebright, 2014; Bott & Wheatly, 2015; Sherman, 2008; Smith, 2010; Watson, 2016). Businesses also benefit from the implementation of leadership development programs (Lawler & Worley, 2009). McBroom (2008), concluded his dissertation with the statement that, “The most important conclusion from this research is that the criticisms of leadership programs have been inaccurate at best” (p. 197).

Specific Leadership Development Practices

Leadership development is a process in which a wide degree of activities contributes to the overall development of a leader (Kennedy, 2009). Leadership development practices include both informal and formal processes (Smith, 2010). Leadership development practices include mentorship, experience, and education. One of the key elements of leadership development programs is providing mentors for students (Bonebright, 2014; Matthews, 2012; Wilson, 2010; Yazdana, 2014). Leadership development through mentoring has been linked to the academic success of African-American male students (Bradley, 2015; Robinson, 2011) and non-racially specified female students (Bott & Wheatley, 2015). Both formal instruction and informal interactions within the context of an organized leadership development program are beneficial to participants (Sherman, 2008; Smith, 2010).

Developing leaders happens both experientially and through formal education (Yost, 2013). A key aspect of leadership development is allowing leaders to learn from experience (Sashkin,

2014; Smith, 2010; Snook, Nohria, & Khurana, 2012). Runde and Flanagan (2013) wrote, “A basic premise of leadership development is that leaders learn from experience. In fact, many leaders report learning most from their experiences with challenging assignments or resulting from personal or professional hardships” (p. 162). Providing leaders with the opportunity to practice leading is absolutely critical to the development of an individual’s leadership skill (Winn, 2016). In addition to experiential learning, leadership development happens as a result of formally educating people about leadership (Loughead, et al, 2014). As leadership research has grown, researchers have discovered clear benefits to teaching individuals leadership skills (Smith, 2010). Anderson (2012) found formal lessons on leadership to be beneficial for the social and emotional development of pre-kindergarten students. Similarly, McBroom (2008) found formal leadership education to be a positive influence on college presidents. Proper teaching regarding how to lead well is a valuable tool for developing effective leaders (Pigza, 2015).

Conclusion

Leadership is vitally important to the health of an organization. Every organization needs effective leadership. Leadership is a developable skill available to any person. The leader has the responsibility to develop the skills necessary to lead his or her organization effectively. As formal programs of leadership study and leadership development continue to develop in educational institutions, it is imperative to identify best practices for teaching students about leadership.