Leadership Styles in Organizations
an Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is the key dynamic force that motivates and coordinates an organization to accomplish its objectives. A leader creates a vision for the others and then directs them towards achieving that vision. Leaders' behavior is one of the keys to organizations success, because it strongly influences subordinates motivation and performance and also plays a critical role in driving change. Today, more than ever leadership behaviour is the critical to fostering a healthy culture and retaining the best possible Leaders achieve successful change by constantly balancing the two dimensions: concern for the task; and the concern for the people. The purpose of this paper is to explore leadership style in the organizations. A structured questionnaire was developed and administered to 50 leaders in various organisations. The research was limited to leaders in an organization. The aim of the study is to understand the leadership style adopted by the leaders to achieve the organizational objectives. The results show that the leaders had an autocratic style of leadership. For leaders to be effective, they would need to adapt their leadership style to the situation.

KEYWORDS: Leadership, Leadership styles, Subordinate, Organisation

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is the ability to help others to meet their goals. Good leadership is required for the effective and efficient outcome. Leadership remains one of the most relevant aspects of the organizational context. Leadership has different meanings to different authors (John P. Kotter 2001). Leadership is defined as influence, that is, the art or process of influencing people so that they will strive willingly and enthusiastically toward the achievement of group goals (Warren Bennis and James O'Toole 2000). Leadership has been described as the "process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task". (Chemers, M. M., 2002).

As leadership always entails a relationship between leaders and followers, it is important to focus on the leader as a moral manager. Leadership is an essential feature of the ethical culture of an organization (Treviño, Weaver, Gibson, & Toffler, 1999), and it is the leader who is able to place ethics on the organizational agenda (Treviño, Brown, & Hartman, 2003; Treviño et al., 2000). Followers learn what to do and what not to do by observing their leaders' behavior and are likely to imitate their leaders, whether the example set by the leader is good or bad (Kaptein, 2002; Kaptein & Wempe, 2002; Lasthuizen, 2008; Scutar, McNeil & Molster, 1994).

LEADERSHIP STYLES

Leadership style refers to a leader's behavior. It is the result of the philosophy, personality and experience of the leader. There are several theories on leadership behavior and styles. Kurt Lewin and colleagues identified different styles of leadership: Dictator, Autocratic, Participative, and Laissez Faire (Lewin, K et al, 1939). Leadership styles have been classified based on how leaders use their authority. Leaders are seen as applying three basic styles. The autocratic leader commands and expects compliance, is dogmatic and positive, and leads by the ability to withhold or give rewards and punishment. The democratic, or participative, leader consults with subordinates on proposed actions and decisions and encourages participation from them. The free-rein leader uses his or her power very little, if at all, giving subordinates a high degree of independence in their operations.

A well-known approach to defining leadership styles is the managerial grid, developed decades ago by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (Robert R. Blake and Jane Mouton 1954) As Blake and Mouton emphasize, their use of the phrase concern for is meant to convey how managers are concerned about production or how they are concerned about people. Concern for people is likewise interpreted in a broad way. It includes such elements as the degree of personal commitment toward goal achievement, maintenance of the self-esteem of workers, placement of responsibility on the basis of trust rather than obedience, provision of good working conditions, and maintenance of satisfying interpersonal relations.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Success of an organization depends upon how effectively and efficiently a leader manages and influences the subordinates to achieve the organizational objective which in turn depends upon the role/behaviour/style a leader applied in an organisation. Studying the leadership style in organization is essential to know the way leaders influence and manages their subordinates in their day-to-day activities. Thus, this study titled "Leadership Styles in Organisations" is of significance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

This paper is aimed to evaluate leaders in terms of the leadership of task orientation and people orientation. The objectives of study are to:

1) The way leaders influence followers/subordinates.
2) What leaders/managers do in their day-to-day jobs?
3) How leaders can be effective?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted among a convenient sample of fifty leaders in various organizations situated in Andhra Pradesh. Primary data collection was based on questionnaire. A questionnaire was administered to the leaders to know their behaviour and style. The dependent variable (Leadership Style) in the research was based on three styles such as task oriented (Autocratic) leadership, shared leadership and people oriented (Laissez-faire) leadership style.
Research instruments

A survey was conducted by using a questionnaire developed by Sergiovanni, Metzcus, and Burden (1969) and adopted by Ritchie and Thompson, 1986 and has been used in many leadership style studies (Sophonthummapharn, 2005). This leadership instrument taps the degree to which leaders are task or people-oriented. Task orientation is concerned with getting the job done, while people-orientation focuses on group interactions and the needs of individual members. T-P Leadership Questionnaire was used which contained of 35 items measuring major characteristics of leadership styles task-oriented and people-oriented. Instrument categorizes the leadership style into two types. The dependent variable (leadership style) in the research was based on task oriented (autocratic) leadership style, shared leadership and people oriented (laissez-faire) leadership style. In many exploratory and descriptive studies this instrument was successfully used to derive leadership styles (Brooks, 1982; Deluga, 2006). A five point Likert scale with options: Always, Often, Seldom, Very rare and Never was used for all items. Leaders were asked to rate the leadership style items as their degree of agreement. The allocation of score was done through the formula (methodology) described in T-P leadership questionnaire.

RESULTS

A total 35 statements were provided to the respondents for the evaluation of leadership style of the leaders in the organizations. The responses of the respondents towards the 35 statements are given in Appendix-1.

The content analyzed in this study was the replies of the leaders to the question about the leadership role they played in the organizational situation. The distribution of leadership style among leaders is represented in Table-1.

Table-1: Distribution of Leadership Style among leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership style</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autocratic</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laissez-faire</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the data gathered from the questionnaire, 44% of leaders are having autocratic leadership style, while 30% are having shared leadership style and 26 % are having laissez-faire leadership style. As major part of the percent is having autocratic style of leadership, this means that they are high in task orientation. On the other extreme 26% were concerned primarily about the people. 30% of them are concerned about balancing task and people. Therefore, concern for task is a major characteristic of the leaders of various organizations.

Leadership style profile sheet has been drawn with the responses of the study. To determine the style of leadership, score on the concern for task dimension (T) was marked on the left-hand arrow and score on the concern for people dimension (P) was marked on the right-hand arrow. A straight line is drawn intersecting the P and T scores. The point at which that line crosses the shared leadership arrow indicates the score on that dimension. The score is drawn in the Leadership Style Profile Sheet (Fig.1).

Different situations call for different leadership styles. Choosing an appropriate leadership style depends on several factors, including the leader, the group, and the situation. Leaders' maturity, knowledge, previous experiences, biases, and skills have a strong impact on the styles of leadership they are comfortable using.

Different styles of leadership will have potential to be effective in certain types of situations. An autocratic leadership style may be most effective when a leader is more experienced and expertise or where there is an emergency or little time. A laissez-faire style of leadership might be most appropriate in a highly motivated and aligned team with a homogeneous level of expertise and when the purpose is to enhance and empower group process and development. The style adopted should be that which most effectively achieves the objectives of the group while balancing the interests of its individual members. It is important to understand the appropriate styles of leadership for different situations. Often, activities are not successful because of a mismatch of leadership style and participant needs.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this were that the most of the leaders in the organizations used the autocratic style of management where the decisions making and control was unilateral rather than consulting the group. Different tasks and situation require different leadership style. For leaders to be effective, they need to adapt their leadership style to the situation. Since behavioral aspects of the leaders can’t be changed fully, the situation should be changed or leader needs to adapt the style which matches to the situation. Leaders can become effective leaders by changing their roles depending upon the situations and by communicating properly and accurately with their subordinates which is a key element of leadership.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank All India Council For Technical Education (AICTE), New Delhi, India for offering “Career Award for Young Teachers” and financial support. I thank Vasthushilpi Dr. B.N. Reddy, Chairman, CBES, Sri.D. Kamalakar Reddy, Secretary, CBES, and Dr. B. Chennakesava Rao, Principal, for their encouragement.