

ISSN: 2315-7844

Website: www.arabianjbm.com/RPAM_index.php

Publisher: Department of Public Administration Nnamdi Azikiwe
University, Awka, Nigeria and Zainab Arabian Research Society
for Multidisciplinary Issues Dubai, UAE

APPROACHES, SKILLS AND STYLES OF LEADERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

Leadership entails changing an organization and making active choices among plausible alternatives, and depends on development of others and mobilizing them to get the job done. A good leader is one who is capable of persuading others to move enthusiastically towards the achievement of group goals. What is normally expected from employees is that they work with total zeal and determination, but this is not always the case. Without a good leadership style, the performance level of staff will be poor. This, no doubt reduces credibility of the services rendered. The situation of the problem is poor delegation of duty, lack of dedication to work as a result of poor leadership style. The objectives of this study are to examine the various leadership styles, approaches to the study of leadership styles and the impact of leadership style in organization. In carrying out this research, the documentary analysis method of research was adopted and information and data were elicited from relevant literature for the study. The study reveals that a good leadership style, such as the democratic style could persuade workers towards a high level of performance and that acquisition of leadership skill is very important for a leader to lead well and so on. The paper recommends amongst others that leaders should encourage inter-personal relationship with their employees and that merit award should be established in every organization to spur workers to put in their best.

Key words: Leadership, Style, Impact, Autocratic, Democratic, Approaches, Organization

Introduction

Leadership is an essential function in every organization. In fact, no organization can exist without a leader. The goal of any organization depends on the people that are employed to achieve the organizational objectives. Effective administration depends to a very great extent on sound leadership that can influence the workers in such a way that they all strive towards achieving the desired objective of the organization. Importantly, workers should be encouraged to work willingly with zeal and confidence. Since leadership is very important in organization, there is need to look at different views that have been given by some scholars about leadership and leaders.

Leadership is about innovation and initiative. Leadership is creative, adaptive and agile. Leadership looks at the horizon, not just the bottom line (Aibieyi,2009). Leadership has to do with influencing workers behavior towards the attainment of organizational goals and objectives.

Leadership exhibited by the quality of behavior of an individual in guiding people or their activities in organized effort. It is an essential indispensable social essence that common purpose. It also creates the incentive that makes other incentive effective, that infuse decision without which cooperation is impossible. Leadership is based on the personal qualities of the leader to influence workers to voluntarily comply with all working principles of the organization.

Leadership is the ability to inspire others to willingly perform their institutional duties. Leadership always shows where we want to go and the way forward. Leadership also means inspiring others to perform organized duties freely and willingly to achieve the objectives and the organizational goals.

Literature Review

The concept of leadership has been defined by different scholars in various ways. In fact, there are many definitions of leadership as there are writers. The literary meaning of leadership in universal dictionary and thesaurus says that it is the act of leading, the ability to be a leader, the leaders of an organization or movement collectively. However, the meaning of leadership was further explained by scholars since the dictionary meaning does not explain fully. Aibieyi (2009), defines the subject matter as the innovation and initiative, leadership is creative adaptive and agile. Herold Koontz (1988) defines Leadership as the art of influencing people so that they strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the accomplishment of group goals. Heresay and Blanchard (1977) view leadership as a process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts towards achievement in a given situation.

Arubayi (1995) defines leadership in the secondary school context as a situation where the principal or administrator tries to influence the behaviour of teachers and students to achieve the goals and objectives of the school. Macfarland (1979) asserts that leadership is the quality of behaviour of an individual where by they guide people or their activities in organized effort. He further says that leadership is an essential indispensable social essence that gives common meaning to a common purpose. It also creates the incentive that makes other incentive effective, that infuse decision without which cooperation is impossible.

Unugbro (1995) cited Terry G (1977) definition of leadership as the activity of influencing people to strive willingly for group objectives. Chester (1973) sees leadership as a social influence process in which the leaders seek the voluntary participation of his subordinates in an effort to meet organizational objectives. Katz and Khan (1979) view leadership as an influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of an organization.

Finally, Etzoni (1964) was not left out, he defines leadership as the ability based on the personal qualities of the leaders to influence the followers voluntarily with compliance in broad range of matter.

From the above definitions, it shows that they all have a common word that is, the art of influence. Leadership involves other people, that is, subordinate or followers, group members help define leader's status and make the leadership process possible. Without subordinate, all the leadership qualities of a leader will be irrelevant. The leader's major duty as an influential person is to influence the behaviour of the followers.

The way the followers are influenced makes him have the urge to work in an extraordinary way than he is naturally willing to perform. This suggests that the essence is cooperative followership.

Approaches To The Study Of Followership

There are three major approaches or theories to the study of leadership. These are the traits or psychological approach, the situational or contingency approach and thirdly the behavioral approach.

The traitist approach had the belief that leaders are born and not made and that there are certain qualities that are limited to only leaders which constitute the distinguishing factors between the leader and others. This approach according to Edem (1987) is that because an individual has certain behaviour partially which forms the product of his personality which makes it easier to distinguish him from others.

These traits, the approach argued are knowledge, flexibility of mind, will-power, integrity and physical and emotion stamina. The approach conceives the fact that these leadership traits are present in all leaders and groups in which leadership exists. Moreover, trait theories failed to consider the influence of situational factors. It has been possible to identify universal, specific traits common to all leaders. Since leaders do not function in a vacuum, the social, cultural and physical environment plays complex role in the development and existence of a leader.

According to Unugbro (1995), there are some weaknesses of trait theory, which include the following;

1. List of traits usually do not indicate which ones are most or lesser important.
2. Trait studies do not distinguish between trait that are needed for acquiring leadership and those that are necessary for maintaining leadership position.
3. Trait theories are based on debatable assumptions regarding personality which for example ignore the fact that personality is not the mere summation of a collection of traits but a function of the total organization of the individuals.

Situational Approach

The situational approach believes that leadership is a function of a social situation, in which there is interaction between the leader and the subordinate. Gibb (1984) argues that leadership is a concept applied to the interaction between two or more persons, any group is a system of interaction in which every member is assigned a role within the system. This role is any expression of his interactions with other members. Therefore, leadership is a combination of personality and social system in interaction.

Leadership cannot have impact if it is not in interaction with the environment. Thus Edem (1987) argued that leaders in different situations may exhibit dissimilar characteristics and that their success in one situation may not be observed in another.

Behavioural Approach

This approach sees the leader as one who is passive. This is because leadership is the possession or the interaction of personality and the social environment is propelled by the virtue of the status.

It is important to point out that administrators are appointed based on the qualifications and length of service. It is important to note that on his appointment, he makes some relevant efforts to introduce measures and behaviour that promotes friendship, respect, mutual trust, respect and warmth between himself and the staff. The major criticism by the proponents of the behavioural approach is that one does not need to be a leader by virtue of title or being able to interact with the social system before becoming a leader, but upon becoming a leader, should be able to take initiatives that is, behaviour is contingent upon purpose.

Leadership Skills

Another way of analyzing leadership behaviour is in terms of the skills that the leader may exhibit. Included here are technical, human and conceptual skills.

Technical Skills: Technical skills are most important at lower managerial levels where the products or service of the organization are produced. Examples of these skills are the training and experience of engineers, mechanics, computer operators, technicians and accountants.

As a manager moves up the organization hierarchy, the importance of technical knowledge decreases and the job begins to require increased amount of other skills. Then the leader personally must rely more and more on the technical skills of the subordinate.

Human Skill: The second kind of skill is the human skill. Human skills are important throughout all management levels. They are concerned with the interpersonal relationship between the manager and those with whom the manager comes in contact.

They are also concerned with applying external motivation to group members and obtaining cooperation from both peers and superiors.

Conceptual Skill: The third skill is the conceptual skill which involves the ability to view the most important at the top levels of management where long planning and broad thinking are required. As leaders move to higher positions in the organizational hierarchy, they must develop and utilize the skill increasingly.

Proportional Skill Requirement: The proportion of technical and conceptual skills is a skill requirement which varies with managerial levels. The skills are necessary for dealing with people who remain important for all levels in the managerial hierarchy.

Leadership Styles

Some considerable amount of work has been done on leader's style, by several scholars. Rensis Likert (1967) developed universal theory or style ranging from autocratic to participative, that is system one to four theory;

System One: Exploitative or Authoritative

Here managers make all decisions. They decide what is to be done, who will do it and how and when it is to be accomplished. Failure to complete work as assigned results in threats or punishment. According to Likert (1967) there is low level of trust and confidence between management and employees when system one is used. It is task – oriented.

System Two: Benevolent – Autocratic

Manager still make the decisions, but employees have some degree of freedom and flexibility in performing their job so long as they conform to the specific procedures under this system, managers take a very paternalistic attitude. With system two, there is a fairly low level of trust between the management and the employees which causes employees to use caution when dealing with management.

System Three: Consultative

Managers consult with employees prior to establishing the goals and making decision about the work. Employees have considerable degree of freedom in making their own decision as to how to accomplish the work. Management tends to rely on rewards as opposed to accomplishment to motivate employees. Also, the level of trust between the employees and management is fairly high creating a climate in which employees feel relatively free to openly discuss work-related matter with management.

System Four: Participative Team

This is the most like recommended system or style of leadership. The emphasis of system four is on a group participative role with full involvement of the employees in the process of establishing goals and making jobs-related decisions. Employees feel free to discuss matters with their leaders who display supportive behavior. The leader provides a link between the organizations and the employees..

Decision making is widespread throughout the enterprise. However, this last style was deemed best in the long run for all situations because any leader who adopt this participative style will definitely have greater management effectiveness and efficiency.

The Impact Of Leadership Style On The Organization

The impact of leadership style on the organization cannot be over emphasized. For example, an effective subordinate could be rendered ineffective if the leadership style is in conflict with the task role of the subordinates. On the other hand, an ineffective subordinate could be made effective if the leadership style encourages such improvement and dedication.

Specifically, the way in which a leader disciplines his staff, his human relations feelings, his consideration and inspiration to members of staff, his handling of staff welfare, his staff development and host of other attributes are likely to affect the impact of the staff.

Thus, the more positive approach adopted by the leader in handling the above attributes, the more effective the staff will be, all things being equal.

Conclusion

Leadership is the art of influencing workers to work willingly and enthusiastically for group goal accomplishment. There are several alternatives available to every leader to make a choice in order to develop his employees and mobilize them to get the work done. Leaders influence subordinates to contribute effectively in the manner that all strive towards the achievement of desired goals.

This study is basically a review of the leadership skills, leadership style and their approaches and impact on workers performance. The paper reveals that in order for any organization to succeed in actualizing its goals and objectives, there must be a good leader with the appropriate leadership style such as democratic and participative style of leadership which are capable of involving employees in decision making process as well as persuading them towards the attainment of organizational goals and objectives. The acquisition of leadership skills was also proved to be very important for a leader to lead well and with positive impact on the organization.

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing discussion, the following recommendations are made;

1. Efforts should be geared by the leaders to encourage the interpersonal relationship with the staff of the organization.
2. Annual merit award should be established in every organization to enhance greater performance and as a motivational compensation programme for the best behaved and highest performer of the year.
3. The democratic and participative leadership styles should be encouraged, so as to encourage workers to participate in decision making process. Every worker in an organization should be encouraged to work whenever he or she is given freedom to work and allow participating fully towards the realization of the organization goals and objectives.
4. It is necessary for organization to always organize orientation programme for the leaders and subordinates to enable them know what it takes to lead and direct people. The leaders and their subordinates should work as a team; that is, all hands should be on deck to enhance the organization to sustain its standard in productivity and survival.

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