

TECHNIQUES AND APPROACHES TO STUDY THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP IN CHALLENGING TIMES

Vidhu Gaur, MDI Gurgaon

ABSTRACT

In times of significant change, complexity, and unpredictability, leaders are tasked with adapting to and navigating internal and external forces in order to achieve the best possible outcome for the community. According to leadership experts, leaders will face new problems for which there are no current solutions and will be required to make prudent decisions. This calls into doubt the crucial leadership skills required to thrive and succeed in a complex and uncertain environment. Although this study is predominately conceptual, it is presented as an analysis of the most crucial skills leaders will need when confronting uncertainty. It relies on studying and analyzing available information, including all pertinent information from scientific journals or research papers already present on this topic, by abstracting concepts and ideas from the commercial and educational fields, as well as our findings; it does not involve any practical experimentation. "Understanding the context, defining the direction, developing people, enhancing teaching and learning, growing the organisation, leading oneself, and influencing" are the strategies discussed in this paper "to enhance a leader's capacity to learn, grow, and more effectively navigate the increasing complexity of our world." For the foreseeable future, we recommend several practice areas that will be crucial for administrators. Even though the article cannot cover every possible talent, it focuses on a few crucial skills that are most likely to be useful.

Keywords: Capabilities, Leadership, Uncertain times, Change.

INTRODUCTION

People seek reassurance from their leaders when circumstances are ambiguous (Bartsch et al., 2020). In this period of uncertainty, leaders must provide their adherents and members with direction, inspiration, and motivation. In a dynamic environment, leaders must anticipate problems and make sensible decisions with limited information (Bartsch et al., 2020). Subsequently, major disruptions and crises have elevated leadership ideals to the forefront (Bartsch et al., 2020). In order to inspire, motivate, and direct their followers, team members, and subordinates, leaders must have a firm comprehension of their own personal and organizational values.

Leadership in a Dynamic Environment

This period of profound change and unpredictability appears to have lasted quite a while. The VUCA horizon is characterized by "volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity", as described by Johansen (2012). Peter Drucker warned that society and organizations would undergo unprecedented transformations beginning in the 1950s. After publishing *The New Society* in 1950, he published "The Age of Discontinuity" in 1968, *The Unseen Revolution* in

1976, *Managing in Turbulent Times* in 1980, *The Post-Capitalist Society* in 1993, *Managing in a Time of Great Change* in 1995, and *Managing in the Next Society* in 2000" The 1970 publication of Alvin Toffler's book *Future Shock* stunned the Western world. According to him, we live in a chaotic environment where people and civilizations alike perceive that too much change is occurring too rapidly. Numerous management authors, such as Hamel and Prahalad (1994), Peters (1991, 1992, 2003), Hamel (2007, 2012), and Kotter (2014), have discussed the necessity for leaders to adapt their methods in response to changing circumstances. Similar to continuous waves, per Covey (2004: 105).

We live in an environment that is constantly churning and evolving. Every individual must have something within them that governs their decisions in turbulent waters. They must independently comprehend the team's or organization's mission and guiding principles.

Similar predictions have also been made in the field of education. According to Leithwood and Riehl (2005), the external and interior environments were considerably more complex than in previous decades. They cited a number of internal changes and problems, as well as the broader educational challenges. According to Mulford and Edmunds (2010), institutes are affected by advances in science and technology, population migrations, globalization, and environmental and demographic factors. According to them, institute administrators needed to adjust by balancing competing demands, broadening the definition of quality education, and ensuring that school procedures met the needs of all students.

In 2009, researchers Caldwell and Loader investigated the concept of future-focused institutes and concluded that future, present, and historical perspectives must coexist. Beare (2006) predicted significant changes in education, which were described in detail by the author. In earlier articles (Gurr 2015a; Gurr & Drysdale 2015), we identified current key trends and developments, such as more personalized, authentic, and linked learning, that are anticipated to influence the future educational environment. Gurr (2015a) proposed that teachers' roles will expand as a result of their developing skills in analyzing and addressing the complexities of learning, designing and implementing multifaceted learning experiences, and collaborating with colleagues outside their institution. Connectivity, innovative learning experiences, and rapid, in-depth feedback will flourish in the future as a result of the pervasive adoption of learning technology. The architecture of the building will facilitate an interactive, collaborative, and interconnected atmosphere. Institutions will play a greater role in bolstering our sense of community and will be brighter, gentler, and more inviting places to spend time. The emergence of independent, self-governing institutions will be a recurring pattern, with governments and systems primarily providing the institutions' curriculum and accountability's foundations. This is by no means an exhaustive list, and there is nothing here that is likely to cause a radical shift in how schools operate, but the trends point to an enhanced version of the standard institution experience as we know it today. Although leaders in this environment will use similar techniques as they do today, they must still consider issues such as who will be involved and whether new approaches can be adopted to improve the way teams collaborate.

Johansen (2012) argues that VUCA is more perilous than ever before because change has become more complex and unpredictable. However, it is debatable whether or not changes are occurring faster today (The Economist, 2015). We concur with the authors of the change that leaders must adapt because the world will continue to grow more complex over the next two decades. If we do not make the necessary adjustments, there will ultimately be a tipping point beyond which organizations will be rendered obsolete or irrelevant. Nonetheless, we propose that

there are fundamental competencies that support areas of leadership, providing a foundation for school leaders to build confidence and stability upon. A leader's success can be traced back to the following core areas of leadership, as well as the skills that are most likely to be beneficial in challenging situations. While some of these skills may be brand-new, others have existed for a while and simply require refinement. Instead of attempting to make leaders into superheroes, we should focus on developing the practical skills that support the behaviour that increase our capacity to proceed in the face of ambiguity.

Recognizing the Context

It is well established that context influences academic achievement (Teese & Polesel, 2003). When analyzing successful principals, it becomes apparent that they are not constrained by context; rather, they are able to adapt to, utilize, and shape it to accomplish their objectives. According to Drysdale (2011), effective administrators were adaptable and self-reflective, capable of drawing lessons from practice and experience to ensure the success of their institutions. As part of a special journal issue, this was based on an analysis of ISSPP contributions from several nations that had recently joined the organization. Day (2005: 68) noted early in the ISSPP's history that they had demonstrated the ability to not be constrained by the contexts in which they operate. They neither acquiesce nor subvert nor openly oppose. Instead, they actively mediate and moderate within a set of fundamental values and practices that extend beyond narrowly conceived development agendas.

Therefore, it appears that context awareness is essential for leadership performance.

Defining Direction

A clear sense of direction is commonly recognized as a critical first step toward success in both personal and professional endeavors (Robinson 2008). Most definitions of leadership include the provision of direction (Leithwood & Riehl 2005). Because both notions serve the same function, the terms "vision" and "setting direction" are sometimes used interchangeably. It is difficult to chart a course in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and confusing environment. In this setting, venturing into unexplored terrain risks taking the wrong turn. Gurr (2010) begins his essay, "Leadership for Learning," with a quote from Alice in Wonderland, when Alice first encounters the Cheshire cat and asks for advice. He then inquires about Alice's whereabouts. That, she claims, is immaterial. If that's the case, it doesn't matter which way you turn, he argues in his second response. "So long as I get somewhere," she repeats once more. In anticipation of such issues, Gurr suggests in his article that schools create their own leadership structure rather than consulting the Cheshire cats.

We propose "scenario planning as an alternative to forecasting, strategic risk taking" (taking strategic risks is vital for successful management), and having a moral compass to solve the issue of determining direction. "Scenario planning is a powerful and underutilized tool that supports the strategic planning process."

Developing People

People, particularly in high-capital-human organisations, are the company. Attracting, developing, and keeping excellent educators and maintaining high standards is a top priority for policymakers everywhere. In times of ambiguity, talent management and capacity development are important.

Effective Methods for Managing Skills and Potential(Talent Management)

"War for Talent," released by McKinsey in 1997 and developed into a book by Michaels, Handfield-Jones, and Axelrod in 2001, emphasized the necessity of obtaining, cultivating, and retaining elite people to secure an organization's long-term success. Several OECD analyses (OECD 2005b) confirmed that investing in high-quality educators and classroom education is critical to increasing success. MacBeath (2006) outlined the risks of potential talent loss in education across a variety of nations, emphasizing the importance of being proactive in developing solutions such as "incentives, quick career advancement, professional learning, mentoring and coaching, networking, talent spotting, and distributed leadership."

Leaders must recognize the importance of talent management when it comes to the future of their organizations. Most employees value factors such as "having a salary and work flexibility that support their preferred lifestyle, engaging in interesting work, and having a positive work climate," but according to Behrstock (2010), there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to talent management in either education or business. According to Fernández-Aráoz (2014), in a dynamic and challenging economic climate, CEOs should recruit and promote based on potential. Potential, according to his definition, is the ability to learn and grow into a more sophisticated and challenging position. He believed that motivation, curiosity, knowledge, participation, and determination were more accurate predictors of potential than IQ. According to Australian studies of the hiring process (Jones et al., 2012), talent management should be viewed as a systemic or purposeful endeavor rather than a reactive one. Behrstock (2010) suggested that institution administrators devote time to developing a comprehensive and systematic personnel management strategy. Management is defined as a "organizational approach to leading people by establishing culture, engagement, capability, and capacity through integrated talent acquisition, development, and deployment procedures that correspond with business objectives" (ASTD 2009: 8).

Capability Building

Authors have identified capacity building as a critical factor influencing educational success (Hopkins 2001). The importance of capacity development has been emphasized numerous times in ISSPP research (Gurr & Drysdale 2007). The term "capacity development" refers to a broad range of measures aimed at improving people' and organizations' ability to perform critical activities. This category includes methods such as professional development, coaching, and mentoring, as well as the provision of enabling environments and infrastructures (Harris & Muijs 2005). Capacity-building activities should not be considered an afterthought, but rather a vital component of the institute's long-term strategy (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017). Leaders will need to investigate several types of capacity development and undertake a wide range of capacity building initiatives in order to assist and adapt to the new challenges and foster an

adaptable culture.

Self-Leadership and Interpersonal Influence

Three models for dividing up administration were outlined by Wahlstrom et al., (2010).

1. The term "collective" describes the mutual impact toward a common objective that is attributed to all members in a setting.
2. In a shared model, management is shared by both administrators and employees.
3. Distributed: illustrations of good leadership.

Although the terms "dispersed leadership" and "distributed leadership" are frequently used interchangeably, the latter seems to be more common in academic settings. The increased commitment and motivation of distributed leadership, improved decision-making due to greater participation from more people, and the release of talent due to the empowerment of formal and informal leaders at various levels are all expected to increase organizational effectiveness (Gronn 2008). The parallel leadership concept from the "IDEAS project (Andrews et al., 2004) and the post-heroic leadership concept from the ISSPP (Drysdale et al., 2014)" are the only two examples of how successful leadership is regarded as engaging multiple persons. Numerous studies have been conducted on distributed leadership, and it has many proponents. In particular during times of ambiguity, it is critical for leaders to understand how it is applied in their own environment. Dispersed leadership has been questioned in many ways by numerous authors (Hargreaves & Fink 2009; MacBeath 2009; Mayrowetz 2008); hence, leaders utilizing such a system must consider the following:

What exactly are the "duties, responsibilities, leadership activities, and leadership practices" that are being delegated?

What particular leadership standards apply to each job inside the organization? Would you please describe the types of leadership behaviors we can anticipate from the group?

Is there ever a situation where one distribution method might be preferable to another? How do leaders support the efforts of those in comparable roles?

What degree of familiarity exist between these characters?

Enhancing instruction and learning

By fostering a climate where every student has the highest possibility of academic success, leaders have a duty to focus on the principles of teaching. We focus on three abilities that, while many are required to further education, are particularly crucial in unstable environments: product knowledge, data-driven assessment and decision-making, and familiarity with cutting-edge technologies.

Product Knowledge

Knowledge of current pedagogical theories and practices is referred to as product knowledge. Thompson (1967) claimed "many years ago that schools are unique as organisations" due to the fact that instructional objectives aren't always clear and may frequently conflict with one another, technology is hazy, and participation is variable. These goals appear to be

dynamic targets that are vulnerable to alteration in reaction to changes in the political and social climate, the economy, social mores, technology advancements, and even merely the preferences of specific students and pedagogical theory trends. Even though we now have a lot more information than we did in the past (Hattie 2009), there is still disagreement and controversy about the ways in which technology is used and its results since we do not yet fully understand what occurs in the classroom (Black & Wiliam 2010).

One claim that has emerged as a result of "managerialism" and "neo-liberalism" is that a skilled manager can change careers with ease. A top manager in the transportation industry, for example, ought to be able to oversee health services since the management skills they developed while managing a complex transportation organization are transferable to the equally difficult subject of health care. You may also argue that a CEO of a business would make a better principal of a school. Since it is well-known that administrators and other leaders significantly affect achievement, we argue against this. According to the data, leadership has an impact on students that is second only to classroom instruction (Leithwood et. al., 2004).

When it comes to curriculum, pedagogy, learning, and assessment—all of which have close linkages to their constituents—instructors, students, parents, and the community—leaders are expected to sail the ship. Administrators must understand "what teachers need to know and be able to do to generate excellent opportunities for student learning" (Ingvarson & Rowe 2008) since they are the main agents of institute improvement. Without this "product expertise," it's highly improbable that you would be able to manage the company's core responsibilities. In order to flourish in these unpredictably changing times, leaders must be able to demonstrate that they have a solid understanding of the fundamentals.

Evidence-Based Analysis and Decision-Making

It is the responsibility of leaders to assess and discuss research-based data in order to establish what is current and what is trustworthy evidence that should be paid attention to. Too often, leaders alter programs without carefully considering the data in support of the change. This frequently leads to a multitude of programs that look wonderful on paper but don't work together to promote growth. Whether it's the "neuromyths" surrounding "learning styles, right brain/left brain dominance, brain games, or key times for learning" (Howard-Jones 2014), leaders lose tolerance with the pace of change and jump on the next bandwagon. The ability to find relevant research, assess its quality, and evaluate its findings is crucial, but even more so is the ability to assess own data and determine what may be required to support the next step of progress. Despite the fact that educational statisticians like Marzano (2003) and Hattie (2009) have provided leaders with unmatched access to data on what works, it still takes leadership ability to comprehend how these findings and those from further studies need to be adapted to suit specific conditions.

Definitions of leadership often frame it as a means of exerting one's will on the followers (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). According to Kouzes and Posner (2007), one must actively seek out chances to exert influence in order to develop one's leadership skills. According to Covey (1990), a leader's actions, including what followers see, hear, and engage with, add up to the leader's overall impact. Leaders are encouraged to maximise their impact by using this multifaceted strategy.

Modalities of Leadership InfluenceHearing from the Leader

Leaders, at a minimum, need to work on their verbal and written communication abilities. They should practise and perfect their public speaking abilities so that their words resonate with their audiences and inspire them to take action as a group. Leaders have mastered the art of persuasion by learning to harness the power of words through metaphor, crafting compelling arguments, appeal to reason and emotion, and other techniques. According to Clinton (2014), leaders in difficult circumstances should "put forth their vision, explain what's occurring, be inclusive of others, and execute." Effective leaders operate as sense-makers and storytellers, explaining the present situation, the background, and the next steps, as well as why they are important. They must, however, treat one another with dignity. Clinton (2014) claimed that expressing respect creates opportunities and gives people hope.

Vision of the Leader

Leaders are not only evaluated on the basis of their words but also on their character and actions. All well-developed philosophies of leadership emphasise the importance of setting an example (Bass & Avolio 1994). As a result, others see honesty, respect, and bravery in how one acts, as well as in how one lives according to their stated ideals and principles. One powerful method of persuasion is to "model the path," as proposed by Kouzes and Posner (2007). They contended that gaining others' respect was a result of acting in a way that was consistent with one's underlying beliefs and principles. Since the leader's actions, words, and even thoughts are constantly scrutinised by subordinates, who assess them based on their perceived impact, the leader's every waking moment is spent under intense scrutiny.

Interacting with the Leader

Leaders occasionally fail to recognize that influence is a two-way street, though. While a leader may simply provide one-sided information to his or her followers, influence can also be acquired through personal relationships. This indicates that speaking and hearing are equally important as seeing and seeing. Followers must think they can influence the leader in order to have an effect on others (Covey, 1990). Early research emphasized the reciprocal nature of the influence between leaders and those they lead, concentrating on the latter's influence (Hollander 1964; Herold 1977; Luthans, 1992).

A leader and follower are in a position to negotiate and communicate with one another, and both are aware of the power they both possess to shape the other's actions. (Luthans, 1992)

You must establish relationships, develop coalitions, and network with other organizations if you want to have impact. By partnering with other organizations, leaders can win the support and engagement of their followers. Participation in governance structures and decision-making forums can provide chances for collaboration and the creation of a shared vision and commitment. Leaders who promote active engagement in group activities are better able to demonstrate empathy for their followers by getting to know their motivations and ambitions.

We contend that in order to effectively communicate in today's challenging environment, leaders must practice both oral and written communication, set an example for others, and actively look for opportunities to engage with a variety of audiences and build positive working

relationships. It's intriguing to observe how, as digital settings become more prevalent, the demand for leaders with excellent communication abilities rises (Gurr 2004).

Expanding the Company

An organisation can only be successful and sustainable if its policies, structures, procedures, programmes, and practises are regularly updated to enhance the productivity of its people. In times of change and uncertainty, we believe that educational leaders must possess the capability of “ability to create an adaptive culture”.

Developing an adaptive culture

The “Dutch Shell Company” researched the causes of the lifespan of organisations that had been in existence for hundreds of years in the 1980s. (de Geus 1997). Those businesses that made it had these four qualities:

1. A keen awareness of their surroundings
2. A high level of solidarity and shared perception
3. Openness to other viewpoints and methods of operation
4. Master its own development and progress.

According to analysis, these four features all work together to form what we call an "adaptive culture," one that can successfully navigate the challenges of change and uncertainty.

Organizational success relies heavily on having the correct culture. It was Peters and Waterman (1982) who first highlighted the significance of corporate culture in creating successful businesses. Many authors have discussed the significance of this factor in moulding the organisation (Deal & Kennedy (1982) and Schein (1987)). Gerstner (2002), the man widely credited with saving IBM in the late 1990s, reflected on his experience and concluded that the company's culture was more crucial than strategic planning and data crunching. To him, culture was not a facet of the game but rather the game itself. There are many ways to describe culture, but one of the most frequent is as an enduring pattern of “beliefs, symbols, rituals, myths, and behaviours” that have developed through time (Schein 1987; Deal & Kennedy 1982). This is just how we do things around here, as it is often said.

Conventional wisdom holds that an organisational culture may be built either from the top down or from the bottom up, with the latter emphasising the workings inside the company as a whole (Schein 1987; Deal & Kennedy 1982). According to Schein (1987), an organization's culture is shaped in large part by its founders, who serve as role models for employees and set the tone for acceptable conduct. Stories, as well as recognising and rewarding those who uphold the intended cultural norms, are critical to the survival of cultural traditions (top down). However, it also evolves as a result of socialisation and the processes through which groups of people come to share common values, beliefs, and standards. Culture is something that happens inside an organisation and is shaped by the sentiments, beliefs, assumptions, and perspectives of its members. A culture is said to be adaptable if its members are able to learn from and adjust to unpredictable and fluctuating environmental conditions (Senge et al., 2000). When faced with a problem, people in an adaptable culture are creative problem solvers who can think outside the box (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky 2009). The studies conducted as part of the International Security and Cooperation Partnership (ISSPP) provide evidence on the significance of

cultural flexibility in response to external threats and new possibilities (Gurr 2015b).

CONCLUSION

The current era is a volatile one, as is universally acknowledged. In these uncertain times, closing the gap between "leading" and "managing" is essential. In order to show the way forward and to inspire and motivate the team, leaders are essential in every organization. The same leaders are required to play an overtly active role in order to make sure that concepts are translated into workable plans and that initiatives are constantly pursued until they are successful. Most organizational theorists concur that for success to continue in the future, leaders will need to adapt to changes in the marketplace. Although we both agree that change is inevitable, we also believe that there are some crucial aspects of leadership that will mostly remain unchanged. Establishing a plan of action, developing talent, bolstering the team, improving the institution, improving training, persuading others, and directing one's own development are all skills that are necessary for leading an institute. Any leader needs the fundamental abilities that will enable them to carry out their plans even when conditions are uncertain. Even while many of these traits have long been expected of any capable leader, we contend that they must constantly be evaluated and developed in order to remain such. For each category of leadership responsibility, we looked at some of the most critical characteristics using business and educational literature. As an adventure that combines art and science, leadership is a skill that leaders will get from discovering and honing in addition to their core leadership abilities. This research offers a set of vital abilities that form a strong foundation for effective leadership and could act as a springboard for leaders as they develop their own portfolios of abilities.

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