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Vision That Needs to Be Technically Managed

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Abstract

This essay aims to conceptualize the differences and complementariness of leadership and management in the discourses of change management in organizations that can be best applied to educational leadership. The discrepancies and co-existent links between the two are discussed in terms of leaders and managers' personal traits, their interaction patterns towards power influence, their strategies for dealing with change, the results at workplace, and their followers' perceptions towards them.

Leadership and management are sometimes used interchangeably, but they describe two different notions with distinct functions (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kotter, 1990). This essay does not aim to present various definitions of leadership and management, but it places a focus on a comparison between the two terms and concludes that leadership and management should be integrated in business management approaches due to their significant differences. More specifically, leaders have to mostly deal with vision-building while day-to-day problem solving is a management function. According to Law and Glover (2000, p. 13), "leadership is frequently seen as an aspect of management" and leaders have "the ability to motivate and enthuse others." In real organizational practice, there is, in fact, both a discrepancy and a co-existent link between the two in terms of leaders and managers' personal traits, their interaction patterns towards power influence, their strategies for dealing with change, the results at workplace, and their followers' perceptions towards them.

Management is considered as an internal process where managers try to attain the organization's goals by getting their subordinates to do things in the right ways, and they have to do so because of the duties of their positions and the nature of administrative paperwork (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Christie & Lingard, 2001; Lim & Daft, 2004). As a consequence, it is assumed that managers should be professional, hardworking, patient and tough-minded when gathering different sources of information and processing them to produce final products (Zaleznik, 1977). In order to be able to discern a way to be an appropriate one, they must be analytical, and they have to think incrementally by following organizational policies (Hickman, Wiley, & Sons, 1996). In addition, managers need to be skilful professionals who know or have learnt business strategies and techniques. Because they have to control people's work effectiveness, they must be disciplined to set examples and to push followers to work within the organization. They are supposed to be sympathetic; but to some extent, they sometimes appear unsympathetic to adhere to mission statements or operational plans set out by the organization. They are expected to understand their followers' feelings; but some managers in large-size organizations sometimes appear too hard-hearted to care about others' personal feelings. A fordist way of working is employed in management where employees are aligned in certain work moulds because they have been assigned to attain business targets by any means

In contrast, leadership is viewed as an internal and external process of exercising influence to get followers to do the “right” things (according to the leaders’ perceptions) to achieve goals in an interactive manner (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, pp. 15-21; Christie & Lingard, 2001, p. 2; Stogdill, 1974, p. 414). It is argued that leadership can happen (and it actually happens) both inside and outside, and at different levels of the organization (Christie & Lingard, 2001; Murgatroyd & Reynoldds, 1984). Everyone may become a leader as long as they can devise ways which can influence and encourage people to pursue a goal for common good. Hickman et al. (1996) assume that leaders, therefore, have to be visionary and creative to think on their feet, or as Bennis and Nanus (1985) point out, they need a dream that can focus on the minds, energies, and determination to live with that dream of the people involved. In some organizations some subordinates with special talents may emerge as leaders who create vision and strategies to accomplish a goal by considering values as guidelines for their actions and behaviours instead of solely controlling others technically (Predpall, 1994). This list of leadership characteristics hence consists of enthusiasm, sympathy and self-confidence. Leaders are more or less empathetic – being able to understand other people’s feelings by having already experienced or by “putting themselves in someone else’s shoes” (Welbourn, 1988, p. 46) - to call for followers’ commitment and involvement. It seems to some theorists that leaders have too perfect personalities to exist in reality: being heroic (Christie & Lingard, 2001) and charismatic. Despite the fact that leadership is a skill that can be trained and developed if a prospective leader is eager to invest adequate effort (Bennis & Nanus, 1985), this trait theory considers leaders as “great men” with their extraordinarily good characteristics such as intelligence, honesty, self-confidence and attractive appearance (Lim & Daft, 2004; Stogdill, 1948), which can attract other people to follow. It, therefore, assumes that “leaders are born, not made” (Law & Glover, 2000, p. 21). The theory is partly true because human history has provided convincing evidence about world-known leaders including both ethically good and condemned ones like Bill Clinton, Walt Disney, Genghis Khan, Hun Sen, Maria Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, to name but a few*. On the other hand, there are still other successful leaders everywhere being too unknown due to their small businesses, their remote geography or the lesser power their less developed countries bring into global markets. What is more, many male and female leaders have to wear masks at work, pretending to be “perfect leaders” who are followed due to their ability to unite other people behind (Moodley & Whithhead, 1999). In my personal view, leaders are also amicable, sociable, adventurous, and proactive so as to be able to communicate their dreams with meanings to their subordinates. In brief, leadership is a “people activity” (Lim & Daft, 2004, p. 7) which involves people’s intention, personal responsibility and willingness in the pursuit of a shared goal.

The second difference is about the interactions that they have towards their followers to exercise power. Managers are mostly concerned with strategies and techniques that help their followers do things in the right ways (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Coordination is often sought to work towards goal achievement. Consequently, loyalty among the group must be (even coercively) maintained because betrayal can bring adverse benefits to competitors (Hickman et al., 1996). Furthermore, one of the managers’ jobs is to control followers by exploiting different sources of power in the

forms of rewards and punishments. The purpose is “to complete routine jobs successfully, day after day” (Kotter, 1990, p. 107). So staffing appropriate employees into certain positions and tasks is necessary, and this sometimes results in top-down management where followers’ obedience must exist. Managers must also care about the relationships between tasks and individuals to staff their subordinates effectively. If managers are able to push their group towards goal achievement successfully, both parties can earn benefits owing to reward power. If not, both may suffer from punishment, and this is the case when mid-level management is to face with severe criticism and castigation from higher authorities. As a result, this relationship between managers and employees mostly stems from a transactional view where trading-off occurs between the two parties (Stoll & Fink, 1996).

However, as Kotter (1990) mentions, leaders motivate people to work by considering their needs and thinking of ways to offer work motives. Therefore, both parties are mutually raised to a better stance where the states of controlling and being controlled are transformed to inspirations and motivations. This is also why Clements and Washbush (1999) (also Lim & Daft, 2004) warn that some leaders tend to “love themselves”, and in order to gain more power, they like to be supported and surrounded by their subordinates being sycophants who expect to get more favour from those leaders, and “yes people” who blindly follow them. To work with followers, leaders have to call for collaboration to build teamwork (Adair, 1983), and so aligning employees to fit in certain positions is another feature of leadership (Kotter, 1990). Leaders create networks to link followers together with a focus on the relationships between tasks, followers’ competence, and their commitment like what managers sometimes have to do when they focus on the relationships between tasks and employees. Not many people wish to work in an organization where their values, contribution and expectations are not recognized. Instead, the new organization is viewed as a vehicle which individuals may use to work towards goal achievement (Bredenkamp, 2002; Huczynski & Buchanan, 1991), so leaders need to identify existing attitudes and beliefs within the organization (Sashkin, 1997). In other words, leadership is seen as a multidirectional and non-coercive influence relationship between the lead and the led who plan real changes and predict outcomes that represent their shared purposes and values (Rost, 1993). According to situational theorists, such different strategies as delegating, supporting, guiding, or directing followers are used by both leaders and managers in order to connect people in the network (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993). Contingency theory suggests there be a link between tasks, leaders and followers whereas leaders can create a favourable environment that generates intellectual capacity (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Therefore, leaders are concerned with followers (rather than the term “employees” which directly shows a discrimination between the lead and the led) and their personal and professional needs. In order to stimulate followers’ activeness and willingness, leaders have to share power and authority by “inviting” them to participate in the process (Stoll & Fink, 1996, p. 114), and they also have to learn to become strong to deal with criticism and to know when to change.

The third distinction relates to the notion of change management. In this postmodernist world in which even change itself changes (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Limerick, Cunnington, & Crowther, 2000), managers must be alert and active to non-linear change which causes fundamental transformations that lead to great impact on organizations (Lim & Daft, 2004). Change possibly creates problems, and which

demands managers to design strategies to cope with this world's phenomenon. After solutions are drawn up, managers then have to get employees to accept them through their sources of power like reward, persuasion, or expertise, etc., or they have to balance opposing ideas and choose the most suitable ones. In other words, they actually reduce choices and suggestions from employees (Zaleznik, 1977) to seek stability and alignment within the organization (Yukl, 1994). Additionally, strategic planning and management can ensure this stability which encourages managers not to produce any further changes, but to reach final consensus and to produce final results (Kotter, 1990). Maintaining stability is considered as a cost-saving and energy-efficient way of business management, and hence change is perceived to disrupt the organization's operation. According to Bryman (1986), no matter how changeable change can be, managers are supposed to win set goals. They are then imagined to be certain path-followers (Hodgson, 1987). These paths (which are developed by leaders) are actually paved for them to reach the aims.

Within this era of change full of unpredictability and uncertainty when minor events may lead to massive and far-reaching consequences (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Lim & Daft, 2004; Limerick et al., 2000), leaders, by contrast, always create visions towards the future, anticipating both advantages and disadvantages caused by outsiders. Therefore, leaders become proactive in thinking out ideas and sharpening them to fit in changing circumstances (Zaleznik, 1977). The vision thinkers are also path-finders (Hodgson, 1987) who design directions to follow and general strategies to apply (Kotter, 1990). In addition, according to Limerick et al. (2000), management types have been changed from being classical to humanistic, systematic and to collaborative in this millennium; so leadership styles must also be changed accordingly to suit the dynamic, fluid and self-renewing organizational systems (Lim & Daft, 2004). As a consequence, leaders must be responsible for renovating the internal structures and working systems, and innovating new models to fit the new times and the "Fourth Blueprint" organizations (Limerick et al., 2000). They are again, in other words, creating change and learning to live with constant change and "go with the flow" (Lim & Daft, 2004, p. 12). To deal with this cycle of change, Zaleznik (1977) comments that leaders must not limit different options but develop approaches to encourage anticipations about future problems and consider various solutions. According to Lim and Daft (2004), leaders need to cherish and accept unavoidable constant change and take advantage of change as a potential source of energy for the organization's growth. Therefore, a culture of risk-taking, experiment and discovery must be cultivated and nurtured in an organization.

The fourth difference is about goal achievement. Due to the job of day-to-day problem solving, managers tend to accomplish goals in separate stages as stated in the organization's action programs (Hickman et al., 1996). Processes like strategic planning, organizing, staffing, budgeting and the like are applied to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization's operation (Lim & Daft, 2004). Scrutinizing employees' performance and applying a performance appraisal system are also effective methods used to measure how much a specific task has been completed. What managers expect, according to the author, are the good results employees can produce at the end of the path no matter how hard they have had to struggle during the journey. The outcomes which are usually seen at the economic bottom line are tangible, quantifiable and measurable in terms of the organization's profits and growth.

On the contrary, Kotter (1990) suggests that leaders satisfy their followers' needs to seek staff's commitment and contribution, and leadership is hence value-oriented. Leadership efficiency is also analysed in terms of leaders' reactions towards followers, the group's growth, or the group's ability to deal with change (Yukl, 1994). Leaders tend to create an atmosphere of trust where people can discuss, agree, disagree and work together to achieve a goal in accordance with the group's values (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Leadership then becomes a shared task in such a semi-autonomous group where everyone becomes a partner of the others. The intangible outcomes are not necessarily the financial profits or short-term benefits. In some cases the results are measured in terms of the satisfaction both leaders and their followers are enjoying, and this can negatively and/or positively influence the organizational future development. By checking and utilizing present potentialities such as resource allocation and competing priorities, leaders strive to build a better future with a human substance for the organization and its workers (Hickman et al., 1996).

The last discrepancy is concerned with employees' (followers') attitudes towards managers (leaders). Management requires discipline among staff, so compliance is always favoured. Management is viewed as quite a control process with certain strategies and discipline. Managers aim to make fixed products and duplicate them from the first model, so autocratic managers tend to centralize authority and exercise power from their positions through the control of rewards and coercion (Lim & Daft, 2004). If employees slip out of the management moulds, they can be broken or distorted by managers' power in the form of punishment. Unlike management, leadership is keen on creating inspirations and motivations for both leaders and followers. According to the dyadic theory of leadership, flexibility and decentralization are often preferred when democratic leaders decide to empower and delegate authority to different followers in different ways to encourage willing participation while dealing with change (ibid.). Therefore, an aura of freedom and creativeness is often enjoyed together with a sense of belonging to and involving in the group.

Nonetheless, the two processes cannot exist without the other. In fact, what is most striking about leadership is vision-building, which, according to Covey (1992), has to come before management. This first "creation" is at the top line where questions about the organization's future development are often raised. It is analogous to "leaning the ladder of success" of the organization "against the right wall" (ibid, p. 101). When leaders are at the top of the ladder that has a steady stance, they can look farther into the future with more appropriate predictions. Management is thus like "climbing" this ladder, and so managers at the bottom line are concerned with the ways and techniques to "climb". Leaders often ask questions like "What to accomplish?" whereas "How to accomplish?" is questioned by managers. Leaders with their visions are like path-finders who have management staff as effective "machetes" to open a new route in a "jungle" (ibid.). In addition, while imagination in leadership may inspire people to innovate idea after idea (some of which may be wandering up in the sky), management with its control puts these inspirations down and translates them into real outcomes by its day-to-day problem solving techniques. Thus management can be regarded as a string which ties people with their visions into certain frames in certain phases. Within a specific stage, leadership may recur to attract more visions into the future that help complete a task for that stage.

Management then becomes looser to let people fly with ideas and innovations which will certainly be tied again by control and changed into implementation. This cycle of interactions helps the organization develop and achieve goals more effectively. Leaders cannot just say without doing; nor can managers do anything if they have (or know, or are told) nothing to do.

In short, leadership and management are two distinct processes in organizational management as discussed by numerous writers like Kotter (1996), Rost (1993) or Lim and Daft (2004). More specifically, managers tend to apply technical expertise and rational ways while leaders often call for subordinates' commitment by stirring up emotions and passion and by placing a focus on organizational values. Although management seems to be given a bad name, leadership without management would lead to chaos, and management without leadership would culminate in routine. Inspirational leadership, in my own point of view, should be integrated into loose management.

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