

Chapter 1

Overview of Leadership Approaches

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is the backbone of organizational success, and it is evident from the fact that leadership has been researched for more than 50 years. In literature, leadership has been discussed based on different schools of thoughts. This chapter articulates different leadership approaches in order to provide a clear understanding of leadership development with the passage of time. It describes trait approach, behavioral approach, and contingency approach to leadership. Furthermore, it also explains full range leadership model and some emerging leadership styles in the organizational context.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Northouse (2010), there are many ways to complete the sentence, “leadership is...” Similarly, Stogdill (1974, p.259) claimed that “[There are] almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept.” According to Burns (1978: p. 2), “Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth. In spite of the number of ways which conceptualized leadership, the following five components can be identified as critical to the phenomenon: a) leadership requires influence, b) leadership requires common goals, c) leadership is a process, and d) leadership occurs in groups (Northouse, 2010). Based on these components, Northouse (2010, p.3) defined leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.” In this definition, leadership as a process means that it is not the characteristics or trait that makes a leader but implies that it is the interactive event between a leader and his/her followers. Leadership involves influence; without influence, there is no leadership. Leadership exhibits in groups; the group ranges from a small task group to individuals encompassing a whole organization. Finally, leadership works towards a common goal. The word common means that leaders and their followers pursue a common purpose to achieve any desired goals (Northouse, 2010).

BACKGROUND

Is leadership necessary for organizational change? In answering this question, Burke (2008, pp. 227-228) noted that “what has not been clear from the literature is the impact of leadership on organizational change, and there is little evidence that scientifically demonstrates the leader’s impact” (Ford et al., 2008). Many leadership theories have been developed, and each theory explains leadership with a different point of view, like early theories focusing on the trait or inner qualities of a leader. Other approaches are concerned with the skills and abilities, followed by the leader in a particular situation. Later, contemporary theories include the full range leadership model, including the debate about followers and the leader-followers’ relation (Sloan, 2009). This chapter discusses leadership development by explaining three main approaches (trait approach, behavioral approach, and contingency approach). Furthermore, it also highlights the emerging perspective of leadership.

Trait Approach

The trait approach is the earliest and the most popular leadership approach in research, which tries to classify a set of common traits in leaders. These theories [approaches]

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