Chapter 6

Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ & LBDQ–XII)

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ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on the most widely used and known leadership instrument: The Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ). The LBDQ and its sibling the LBDQ-XII, have been around for more than 50 years and are still being used today. As a result, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the instrument by summarizing its background, and giving a perspective on the instrument’s reliability and validity. This was accomplished by looking at the LBDQ and LBDQ-XII’s long history, how it has been applied over the years, while focusing on the scales main factors of Consideration and Initiation of Structure. Additionally, many analyses of the instruments (LBDQ and LBDQ-XII) were reviewed to support the instruments robust reliability and validity. Lastly, the location and cost of the instruments were revealed in order for the reader to utilize the instrument under study.

BACKGROUND

Leadership has been a major facet for researchers for many years (Bass, 1990; Chang & Lin, 2008; Halpin, 1954; Hills, 1963; Inderlied & Powell, 1979; Katerberg & Hom, 1981; Kenis, 1978; Littrell, 2002; Sashkin, 1979; Schriesheim, 1982; Schriesheim & Kerr, 1974; Stogdill, 1963; Tracy, 1987). From government institutions (such as the military) to industry, to gender, to the clergy, as well as to athletes, the questions as to what makes an person an effective leader, what behaviors do skilled leaders exhibit, and how a person’s natural abilities can be fostered to become a leader have been aspects that researchers have sought to answer. As a result, several measurements have
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been developed and used to address this inquiry, but none more regarded and widely used as the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) (Chang & Lin, 2008; Halpin, 1957; Hills, 1963; Katerberg & Hom, 1981; Kenis, 1978; Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004; Littrell, 2002; Littrell & Nkomo, 2005; Littrell & Valentin, 2005; Schriesheim, 1982; Stogdill, 1963, 1974; Sashkin, 1979; Tracy, 1987).

Before the LBDQ was devised, researchers desired to determine the characteristics of a leader. One group of researchers sought to answer this very issue. The Ohio State University Studies (OSUS) was founded in 1945 by Shartle to address this query (Bass, 1990; Stogdill, 1974). During this time, there were no satisfactory leadership theories or way of determining leadership characteristics.

At first, these researchers assumed that a person was born with leadership abilities. For this reason, they sought to identify traits possessed by leaders (Bass, 1990; Stogdill, 1974). However, this led to a dead end. Analysis of the prior research conducted by the group revealed:

1. That little success had been attained in attempts to select leaders in terms of traits,
2. that numerous traits differentiated leaders from followers,
3. that traits demanded in a leader varied from one situation to another, and
4. that the trait approach ignored the interaction between the leader and his group. (Stogdill, 1974, p. 128)

The OSUS researchers then decided that rather than trying to isolate specific traits associated with leaders, it would be much more efficient to determine the behaviors connected with leadership. Specifically, the researchers wanted “to describe individuals’ behavior while they acted as leaders of groups or organizations” (Bass, 1990, p. 511).

Thus, traits took a back seat to while behaviors came to the forefront of determining what makes a person an influential leader.

The turn away from analyzing traits to behavior was mainly because of the work Hemphill (Bass, 1990; Stogdill, 1974). Hemphill himself had begun looking at behaviors as opposed to traits while he was at the University of Maryland. His work thus reinforced what the OSUS team had begun to observe in their studies. Later Hemphill himself joined the OSUS to further his work in understand leadership behavior. As a result, he and his colleagues set out to examine leadership and assess what behaviors leaders’ encompass. To accomplish this, they created a list of 1,800 statements describing various characteristics of the behaviors exhibited by leaders (Bass, 1990). This was broken down into 150 statements that could all be assigned to one subscale. These statements were consequently used to create the first form of the LBDQ. However, as the subscales totals were interrelated, two factors were produced. These were Consideration and Initiation of Structure in Interaction (Bass, 1990; Chang & Lin, 2008; Halpin, 1957; Judge et al., 2004; Katerberg & Hom, 1981; Sashkin, 1979; Seltzer & Bass, 1990; Schriesheim, 1982; Schriesheim & Kerr, 1974; Stogdill, 1963, 1974; Tracy, 1987).

Consideration refers to how much a leader shows concerns for the interests of the members of the group. As Bass (1990) remarked:

The considerate leader expresses appreciation for good work, stresses the importance of job satisfaction, maintains and strengthens the self-esteem of subordinates by treating them as equals, makes special efforts to help subordinates’ suggestions into operation, and obtains subordinates’ approval on important matters before going ahead. (p. 511)

In short, Consideration is centered toward relationships the leader has with the other members of the group. The more positive the relationship, the more a leader’s behavior is viewed as constructive for group members. On the contrary, a leader who is considered inconsiderate exhibits behavior such as criticizing subordinates in public, not considering a group member’s feelings, causes a member
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