Situational And Adaptive Leadership Is Effective Leadership

Abstract

The definition of Effective Leadership has become a global phenomenon and with it has come a myriad of academic literature on leadership. This paper will discuss how leadership, specifically in a teaching role, is multidimensional and changes seasonally. This paper will do this through the lens of adaptation and will be based on current and past literature on leadership.

Introduction

Is a person truly an effective leader if they can only lead and influence a specific type of people? We often assume an individual is a leader in a specific field because of their accomplishments or by how many degrees they hold on a topic. We assume that because of their knowledge, they will be able to successfully teach it and lead others to do the same. Leading does not simply consist of giving orders but teaching others to fulfill a common goal. A leader is often defined by the Oxford Dictionary as “The person who leads or commands a group, organization, or country.” It implies that leading is based on command and that a leader is defined by his or her requests. Just as we wear a coat for the cold weather and bring an umbrella for the rain do leadership styles change based on the situation and the followers being lead. Does it do education any good if a professor or teacher leads each student the same? And is a leader truly effective if they are only effective when leading a specific group of people?

I would like to argue that a professor, and maybe even teachers all around, who teaches, leads, and directs students of different levels are not to be considered effective leaders if they are unable and often times, unwilling to adapt to the setting in which they find themselves in. It would be more appropriate to label them as “Training Managers” for they are useful in relaying information but they are ineffective in influencing others to reach a common goal.

Review of Literature

There is a plethora of literature on leadership that discuss primarily, what leadership is defined as and what the different types of leadership are. There is a myriad of leadership types such as charismatic leadership, servant leadership, transformational leadership and many others, also including the new types of leadership that seem to emerge frequently. Leadership theorists would say that Situational Leadership is the act of adapting to a specific situation and therefore discerning which leadership type is the most effective based on that situation (Hersey & Blanchard, 1972; 1982). Being able and willing to adopt this theory into your leadership is what makes you effective.

What most would assume after simply exploring the different ideas and theories of leadership styles that the most effective styles of leadership in the classroom would be Servant Leadership, Directive Leadership (depending on the course and grade level), Transactional Leadership, and Transformational Leadership. These four styles of leadership are commonly used in the

classroom.

Defining Effectiveness in Leadership

If given thirty seconds to define effectiveness in leadership, one might define it in terms of the goal of the given organization. If the goal of the organization is met, then the leader was effective. However, in the bigger picture, that calculation might not always work. If leadership is defined not only by goals being met but by the amount of influence a person has. In simple terms, leadership is "'providing direction' and 'exercising influence.'(Kenneth Leithwood, Karen Seashore Louis, Stephen Anderson and Kyla Wahlstrom, 2004)." When defining or calculating the effectiveness in leadership we must look at not only how well the followers regurgitate information but how do they apply and react to the learned information given by the leader? We must not limit he definition of leadership to the goal being reached but dig deeper into the points of imitation where leaders are almost creating new leaders.

Leadership Theories in Jazz Band

Peter Janson is a professor at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. He teaches a few courses at UMASS, but he is known for being professor of Jazz band. As a world renowned jazz guitarist, Janson has brought his knowledge to the classroom. Under his leadership, Jazz Band has become one of, if not, the most popular ensemble in the music department. How did that happen? The music department at UMASS Boston is classical music based so how did Jazz Band become as popular as it has? Though the curriculum is based solely on classican music, every event on campus that requires a musical component is performed by a student or students from jazz band. Peter Janson has managed to turn a genre that is not usually respected by prestigious academic musicians into a lead ensemble in the Department of music. Jazz band holds a concert every semester under the supervision of Peter Janson and usually consists of four to five seperate bands. These bands range from beginner to advanced. Janson did not have to structure the class in that way. He decided that for his ensemble to be successful, there needs to be space for everyone to grow--even those who have never dabbled in jazz before. His role as a professor and director in these ensembles change depending on who he is teaching. I have been involved with Jazz Band for over 3 years. I started off as a singer in the intermediate ensemble and now I am in the advanced ensemble so I have been able to observe Professor Janson's technique in the classroom. How does he get every band, no matter their level, to sound exquisite by the time the concert comes around? What does he do differently than the other ensembles in the music department that makes Jazz Band stand out from the crowd?

Each of the ensembles in jazz band are lead and directed differently. The beginner ensembles are given a common jazz standard and Professor Janson inputs a lot of his advice and direction. Since these students are new to the world of jazz, Professor Janson spends time not only teaching the musical side of things, but the historical background of the genre so that the students are not copying information but are understanding what they play the music the way they do. In this ensemble, Professor Janson might use Directive Leadership (Flamholz (1990)) simply because at that level, you are incapable of making decisions on your own about a topic you are not knowledgable about. However, when you reach the advanced ensemble, Professor Janson almost never says anything. He usually would use a mix of Tranformational Leadership and Laissez-Faire leadership. Laissez-Faire leadership because at this point, he believes that

you have the basic knowledge of jazz and that you are capable of directing yourself. Each student in the advanced ensemble is now not learning how to play, but how to lead and be a leader. Transformational becuase they were able to observe and be influenced by Professor Janson over the course of a few semesters and now are being intrusted with the opprotunity to make their own decisions.

In interviewing Professor Janson, I have found that he is strategic in the way he directs, teaches, and ultimatley leads each band. I decided to interview Professor Janson because I believe that he is a perfect example to support my argument. He successfully directs different groups of people every day and those people change every semester and as years go by, the demographic of the types of students entering his classroom changes. He consistently has to change the way he directs based on the times. This is what a trueleader excels at. Being able to effectively reach a common goal with different types of people is extraordinary. I do not believe that someone who leads only a specific type of people(even if that group is lead effectively and goals are met) is an effective leader. When asked about his leadership style, Professor Janson said “I don’t know everything and therefore I need to tread lightly on how I try to teach something so that something a student may say may reveal something about them or [my] teaching that might change my mind about what I want to do. I think if you’re not open to that-- If I just come in and say, ‘I know what I’m doing and you’ll do it my way’, I think that isn’t, for me, it’s certainly not, even for a student certainly not the best thing for some students.”(Professor Peter Janson, Personal Interview, October 17, 2019) Just as Jazz is primarily if not all, improvization, Janson’s teaching style fluctuates based on what is needed. Not only what is needed for the students, but what is needed for the collective as a whole. Decisions by Janson are not only made for the students but for the class and the politics behind the scenes. Jazz Band is known as one of the most popular bands in the Department of Music. That does not come without it’s challenged and in order for it to remain as popular and as good as it is, there must be some directive action taken to benefit the student, the class, and Janson’s reputation.

Training Managers

When you begin a new job in retail as a Sales Associate you go through training. Nowadays that training is done online. Common training in retail consists of sitting at a computer for eight hours or so and listening to an automated voice relay information about things you need to know to successfully work as a Sales Associate. This may begin with basic protocol for how to ring at a register, how to deal with a customer who is having problems, what to do in the case of an emergency, etc. Rarely are there any hands on training and when the eight hours of half answering questions to a training review is over, you forget it and when the time comes, you ask co-workers who have been there long enough. Nevermind the people who deal with certain mental disabilities and therefore have a hard time paying attention in these types of learning enviornments. Or the people who do not learn while being talked to and they need hands on learning.

What do you do when that automated training voice is a real person? What do you do when you walk into a classroom and a professor spends an entire semester giving you and fifteen other students information the same way every class session? Even after seeing that the majority of the class failed the first exam not by lack of trying but lack of understanding? If four out of fifteen students evaluate the professor and explain that his or her teaching style worked well for them,

does that qualify that professor as effective?

In the case of Jazz Band, each student is learning not only how to play a jazz standard, but how to be a better musician. Each student is learning how to make each song they learn their own. Based on the observation of Janson's teaching style over the years, it is evident that Situational and Adaptive Leadership is what is the most effective.

Conclusion

Effective leadership in most cases means that a leader is capable of critically discerning seasons, settings, and people and is able to accurately direct that group of people in the best way for the advancement of both the followers, the leader, and the organization as a whole. The concepts and discussion on leadership effectiveness continue to be researched in ways that are often times too broad. There are leadership studies that reflect leadership types but do not go into depth on the application of it. Definitions are imperitive to ones understanding but I would like to point out that the application of it if just as, if not more important to the complete outlook on leadership effectiveness. Being able to give information is not the only way for a person to understand a topic. In the future, it would be beneficial if we do not look at types of leadership and the different leadership styles as an enneagram profile quiz but we look at it as the entire definition of effective leadership. The multiple styles and types of leadership should always be brought up when discussing the effectiveness of a leader and if that person even qualifies as one.

- Briefly summarize findings and theoretical/practical implications
- Often a good idea to include a sentence or two that "looks forward"—what next? What does this mean? Where should we go from here? And if applicable, how might these findings inform your future research? Kj

References and works cited

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2. Janson, P. (2019, October 17). Personal interview.