

Leadership in International Perspective

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Abstract - Since the beginning, when the human being started to live in communities, there were leaders – the person strongest, the person most intelligent, the person who is a soloist but having the quality to congregate people to sing in tune. Talking of the great leaders of all time, some of them are- Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Mao Zedong, Winston Churchill, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in the political arena; Jesus Christ, prophet Mohammad, Confucius, Moses in the religious world; Sun Tzu, Alexander the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, Miyamoto Mushashi in the military affairs. Historically, writing of leadership has always had a cross-cultural flavor. While the leadership is exhibited in all nations and in all societies, cultural norms have always influenced a leader to mend his behavior and leadership style to suit best in a particular situation. Though there is an irony in the whole affair- if the leader attempts to behave too differently from cultural norms he will be rejected; but if he adheres to all cultural norms he will not be considered as a good leader. For leaders must break some norms to be seen as different by their fellow men and women. In this paper, I have examined the study of leadership in general in international perspective while illustrating different approaches to leadership in different countries. I have taken the web help to collect secondary data to conduct my research work.

Key Words: Leadership style, cross-cultural flavor, different approaches

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of leadership is an ancient practice. Dorfman and Ronen observed: Great leaders have existed throughout history and can be found in all cultures. Skillful leadership predates the construction of pyramids in Egypt, in the construction of the massive temples at Thebes (3500 BC) and Pre-Columbians civilizations of America. The practice and philosophy of leadership can be gleaned from writings as diverse in content, philosophy and time as those from Moses to Confucius, to Machiavelli (1468-1527) and John Stewart Mill (1806-1873). Thus the process of leadership has existed before formal history, even when the words and symbols were not invented for the readers to understand them.

Since World War II, leadership has been an important topic of Social science. Large number of books and articles has been written, many theories of leadership have been propounded, but only a few studies have been done to test their effectiveness in cross cultural settings. The 'Universal theories' of Mc Gregor, Likert, Blake and Mouton, Misumi and others have not been adequately substantiated by the research literature. The Vroom and Yetton model, though promising, deals only with a small aspect of leadership (decision making). Despite the lack of testing of Western leadership models, much writing and research has been done on differences of leadership in different cultures.

2. LEADERSHIP TRAITS ACROSS CULTURES:

A leader needs to possess a unique quality to become successful everywhere, in any environment- **emotional intelligence**. Emotional intelligence refers to a set of five individual and social competencies including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills.

Self-awareness is the ability to recognize and understand one's moods, emotions, drives, as well as their effects on other people. Leaders with a high level of self awareness exhibit self confidence, a realistic self assessment and a self-deprecating humour.

Self-regulation is the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods. It's the ability to think before do. Leaders with good level of self regulation exhibits trustworthiness, integrity, comfort with ambiguity and openness to change.

Motivation is reflected in a passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status. Leaders high on motivation exhibit remarkable organizational commitment, drive to achieve and optimism even among all adversities.

Empathy refers to understanding the emotional make up of other people and skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions. Leaders with high level of empathy hold an ability to retain talent in their organization and prove them great in offering service to clients and customers.

Social Skill refers to the proficiency in managing relationships building networks, along with an ability to find common ground and to build rapport. Leaders with high level of social skill are effective in leading change, making and leading change and persuading his team members with high enthusiasm.

3. TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP- TODAY'S SINE QUA NON

Transformational leadership is projected as an approach which is effective in any organization anywhere in the world and represents a higher level of leadership. Transformational leaders are visionary agents with a sense of mission; who are capable of motivating their followers to accept new goals and new ways of doing things. Specifically a transformational leader,

- **Articulates a vision.** Presents in vivid and in emotional terms, an idealized future for the organization- what it can and should become- and makes this vision clear to followers.
- **Breaks from the status quo.** He has a strong desire to go against the tradition and do things differently; he takes the challenge to find new solutions to old problems.
- **Provide goals and a plan.** Has a vision, that is future oriented and provides clear steps for the followers to transform the company.
- **Gives meaning or a purpose to goals.** The leader places the goals in emotion laden stories or in such a cultural context that the subordinates feel the need to follow the leader's ideals- helps subordinates to visualize a future state of a better organization.
- **Takes risks.** He is willing to take more risks for the betterment of his organization than the average leader.
- **Motivated to lead.** Seeks leadership position and displays strong enthusiasm for the leadership role, act as a role model.
- **Builds a power base.** Uses personal power base on expertise, respect, and the admiration of followers.
- **Demonstrate high ethical and moral standards.** Behaves consistently and fairly with a known ethical standard.

Transformational leaders are not new to the present century. The German sociologist Max Weber recognized the existence of transformational leadership throughout history. This type of transformational leadership, he called 'charisma' and he noted that it had existed in all cultures. According to Weber, Jesus Christ and Muhammad were among the first transformational leaders. Most people also consider Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King as representatives of transformational leadership.

Transformational leaders succeed because the subordinates respond to them with high levels of performance, personal devotion, reverence, excitement regarding the leader's ideas and the willingness to sacrifice themselves for the good of the company. However, true transformational leaders are rare; they seem to arise when the organization needs a change at the period of crisis. The behaviors of transformational leaders vary from country to country, from culture to culture. For example, transformational leaders need to be more directive in developing countries, than in developed ones. Though cultures create some problems in using transformational leadership (transformational leadership) concepts in countries like Japan, where the contingent reward system is not as widely used as in the West. These reward systems can also become meaningless in Arab and Turkish cultures where there is a belief that things will happen 'if God wills' and not because leaders have decided to carry them out. Obviously, transformational leadership, though receives universal appreciation, needs to be fine-tuned when applying in any particular country.

4. LEADERSHIP STYLES IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

While discussing the differences in leadership across cultures, it has been noticed that the research has been done on the countries which are more or less economically rich and successful. Here, a few countries, namely, China, Japan, the Arab World and France (among the European countries) has been selected as useful contrasts against the way leadership is manifested in different cultures.

4.1 JAPAN

Though Japanese society is undergoing shifts in its values, business and economic systems, traditional leadership norms are holding firm. Nakane (1970), summarizes the issue of Japanese leadership by stating the following general principles:

- In comparison to leaders in other societies Japanese leaders have less authority and control as they are expected to maintain warm relations with their followers. The followers are allowed to influence the decisions of the leader to a great degree.
- The loyalty of a subordinate to a superior is a virtue in Japanese ethics, thus leaders must allow subordinates to show this loyalty. The leader to a large degree is expected to be dependent on the followers-it is seen positive if the leaders have some weak points and his followers compensate and make them up.
- Leaders must keep conflict, contention, anxiety and tension to a minimum among the workers they lead. An important value in Japanese intra-group relations is conflict avoidance.

There are some very important concepts and values which influence the Japanese society as well as the business world.

Amae, desire to depend upon the love and patience of others.

On and Giri, the debt or obligation one incurs upon receiving their favor or gift from another and *giri* is a word that reflects the norm of duty to pay back debts.

Oyabun-kobun, at work this term refers to senior-junior relationships, based upon mutual trust, benevolence, love and respect.

When an employee in Japan goes to his employer for his advice about a personal problem, the manager listens to his problem, advises and helps the subordinate, this is *oyabun-kobun*. The employee presumes upon the manager's benevolence out of *amae* emotions and manager also reciprocates his *amae* emotions. Now the employee is indebted to manager. In the *giri* phase, the employee will seek ways to repay the manager through obeying or being loyal and manager can also bend some rules for that obedient employee out of his *amae* emotion.

Thus the cultural value associated with the process remains intact.

4.2 CHINA

China has been the world's fastest growing major economy with average growth rate 10% over the last 30 years. The competencies of the business leaders have always been proved a major strength behind this country's phenomenal growth.

There are particularly three unique qualities that the Chinese business leaders nurture among themselves;

a. Social Responsibility:

- The Chinese CEOs like to impose, follow and support stronger regulations in one's own industry.
- They refuse to participate in 'unfair' business practices.
- They voluntarily limit their own profit to a reasonable level for the benefit of industry and society.

There is an example - a CEO of a business, specializing in furniture trading, got concerned at the lack of control and corporate governance that he had witnessed within his large organization. This leader constructed a new management structure. The

objective was to establish rigorous accountability for fair business practices as well as increasing employee motivation through profit sharing.

- b. **Moral Responsibility:** The Chinese business leaders believe that corporate culture is closely related to the personality of the top leaders; only when you have high moral standards, you lay the founding stone of success. So they always in search of a self development because these leaders feel that their own judgment will act as a guide and their behavior will promote transparency and integrity. Along with the improvement of society and business Chinese CEOs are constantly striving for self development. In the Hay Group Study (2007), there was an interesting fact depicted, that a Chinese CEO practiced Buddhist Meditation in order to control his temper and impatience. Another judged the fortunes of his organization to be tied to its ability to acquire knowledge and contacts globally. Mastering spoken English, he argued, was essential not only for him, but, also for his team.
- c. **Harmony:** Seeking harmony in business relation is another striking characteristic that Chinese business leaders have in them. Chinese leaders are often faced with complex, multi-party negotiations involving other businesses and different parts of the local and/or national government – situations that would demand anyone’s negotiation skills. The best Chinese CEOs display a distinctive and effective way of negotiating these complex environments. They do so in such a way as to create a harmonious result in which all parties are at least reasonably satisfied with the result. In doing the same, Chinese CEOs construct and present several alternatives in such a way that each party will voluntarily choose the same alternative which ultimately the leader sees as best overall. Care is taken to ensure that no party fully ‘wins’ at the expense of others. The foundation of this competency is an assumption that the relationships will be long-lasting.

There are some important concept which act as inherent force in the business environment in China

“*guanxi*”, it’s the platform for social and business activities in China, and consists of connections defined by reciprocity, trust and mutual obligations. It’s an unwritten rule in China that if someone does not trust you, they are unlikely to do business with you.

wu, that for a person with a high level of *wu*, ‘personal appearance will be decorous; speech should be orderly; vision should be clear; hearing, distinct; and thought, profound.’ Chinese business leaders believe that to make a decision, you really need to see through the outside into the core. You can only do this with *wu*.

4.3 THE ARAB WORLD

Leadership behaviors in Arab societies are closely linked to tribal traditions as well as Western influences. The Arab managers tend to behave as fathers, protectors, care givers and those who should shoulder all the responsibilities of business. These characteristics are not necessarily negative; they only suggest an authoritative management style. Ali (1998) observes that the tribal kinship influence on managers does not facilitate a willingness to work with groups outside the families, seek alliances with outsiders or break organizational norms. Western influences have also some impacts on Arabian managers. Though the participative or democratic approach of the managers are not quite encouraged because of resistance on the part of political rulers and the conservatism of the society.

Bashir Khadra (1990) has developed an Arabian leadership model, called the ‘prophetic- caliphal’ model. He emphasizes that stability; progress and growth of the system depend on whether the leader is an ‘ordinary’ man or a ‘great man’. If the leader is an ordinary man he has to lift himself up to the stature where he must be considered as a superior than others, so that he can exercise his authority on others. For the great man, however, a different situation exists. His power and influence depend on showing love, a minimum use of coercion and submission to his instructions by his followers. Followers feel exalted to express their emotions and opinions to a great man because such a leader by nature and custom must show his concern in diverse ideas.

There is a term, ‘Sheikocracy’- a leadership style which is followed in Arab countries:

- Hierarchical authority
- Rules and regulations contingent on the personality and power of individuals who make the rules.

- Subordination of efficiency goals to human relations and personal friendship
- A patriarchal approach in leadership
- Nepotism at higher levels of organization
- Open-door policies.

4.4 FRANCE

Leadership in business and government organizations in France is heavily based on belonging to the cadre. So obtaining cadre status is important. One can achieve cadre status in three ways:

Grandes ecoles- professional schools that admit only the best and brightest of France's high school graduates. From these schools, individuals automatically get positioned in a company.

The second way is to get a job after or before the graduation and wait five to ten years to gain the cadre status.

The third way is to enter to a firm without any higher education and over a period of several years prove oneself to be outstanding.

This system of producing leaders from the cream of the crop has some bizarre effects on leadership style. Barsoux and Lawrence (1991) observe that, "French managers see their work as an intellectual challenge...they do not share the Anglo-Saxon view of management as an interpersonally demanding exercise, where plans have to be constantly 'sold' upward and downward using personal skills. The bias is for intellect than action."

French organization are highly centralized have rigid hierarchies and positions of authority are respected. At the top of the firm in France is the PDG (president-director-general). In U.S. terms this position is akin to the chairman of the board and the CEO together. The person occupying this position has complete decision making power and control of the organization. Senior executives in France believe that they owe their high position to their intelligence and should make all critical decision. Because of this rigidity French managers resist adopting a more flexible organizational system.

French leaders are expected to make decisions based on careful quantitative analysis and prefer to communicate by memos and letters. All these reflect their attitude of formality and authoritarianism. French executives command respect and obedience from their subordinates and in turn give their own superiors the same. This is the organizational culture that has been an all pervasive situation over the years in France; any exceptions do not fit with French expectations of organizational leadership.

4.5 INDIA

India is the country of 'unity in diversity'- a country of various cultures, social norms and values but basically conservative but progressive. These diversification has also got reflected in Indian business environment as well as in leadership behavior.

Indian work organization is classified into three types:

- Family managed traditional business
- Professionally managed private organization (some are with foreign collaboration)
- Public Sector organization

In family managed organization the most prevalent style is autocratic; though at the same time a certain amount of paternalistic attitude prevails.

In the private sectors owned by Indians or by MNCs, the atmosphere is more or less democratic and a considerable amount of participation in decision making from workers' end is also encouraged.

In the public sector organizations, a bureaucratic style of leadership is followed because the leading positions are occupied by the civil servants who prefer bureaucratic style more than others.

5. CONCLUSION:

While closing the discussion, it is to conclude that leaders, across the globe characteristically more or less same. They have some special attributions in their character, which make them someone different than others. Though the Behavioral theory believes that, leaders are not born but made. Leadership is the set of skills that can be learned by training, perception, practice and experience over time. Whereas Trait theory believes that, leaders are born not made. While Oscillating between these two theories, we like to emphasize the fact- a good leader, made or born, is the navigator of a ship who only can steer the organization safely to reach its destination.

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