Leadership Theories; an Overview of Early Stages

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Abstract: - During the early of the twentieth century attention in leadership area increased. Leadership is considering as one of the greatest discussed and argued topics in the social sciences. Early leadership theories considered on the behaviors and features of successful leaders. This article reviews existing literature on early leadership theories including: Great Man Theories, Trait Theories and Environmental Theories. The objective of this paper is to analyze the review of literature on early leadership theories over the past years to give more inside to leadership researchers.

Key-Words: - Leadership, Great Man Theories, Trait Theories and Environmental Theories

1 Introduction

It can be concluded that there were writings of attention in leadership theories from early civilizations. Confucius (about 500 B.C.) is one of the earliest inclusive article on leadership composed (Ayman and Korabik 2010), moreover Plato, Plutarch, and Caesar in their writings argued leadership topics (Bass and Stogdill 1981). In the 16th century "The Prince" by Machiavelli is one of remains key works in the background of leadership theory (Machiavelli 1940; Machiavelli 1950).

Recently, leadership still is a topic of interest, as well as an issue of argument among many leadership theorists. Numerous different schools of thought have been successful in relation with leadership simultaneously from initial observations in this area of interest (Stogdill 1974).

According to Levine (2000), the majority of the early leadership theorists presented their findings based on information attained based on experimental observation as an alternative of statistical research. In his study he divided theoretically the leadership theories into groups. The groups of theories are:

1) *The Early Theorists.* In this group the leadership has been found as a product of a set of forces. These researchers did not consider the interaction between leaders and situations in relation to the leadership discussion. The offered theories in this section inclusive Great Man theories, Trait theories, and Environmental theories.

2) *The Interactive Theorists.* From the early to middle 1900's new leadership theories introduced to examine interactive relationships during leadership studies, in opposed to observing leadership traits as parted characteristics of individuals. These theories include the Personal-Situational theories, and Interaction-Expectation Theories.

3) *The Organizational Theorists.* The third section presented below includes theories that investigate the relationship between leaders and organizations. These theories contain the Humanistic theories, and Task-Relationship theories.

4) *The Modern Theorists.* Most recently explained theories outline leadership behavior in terms of the ways in which it influences follower's behavior. In the view of this point, the purpose of this article is to review of the early theories of leadership which commences in the middle 1800s.

As said by Levine (2000), over the years the evolution of Leadership Theories is a complete study of leadership developments in many contexts and theoretical fundamentals. He calculated the history of early leadership theories, binges with the Great man theories to the environmental leadership theory to numerous leadership characteristics. In

this study the researcher only focused on early theories of leadership.

2 Great Man Theories

The Great Man theory has been introduced as the earliest theory of leadership. This theory implicit that great leaders are innate and not made and the theory was standard in the 19th and early 20th centuries (Kirkpatick and Locke 1991). According to (Dowd 1936) this theory exposed that great leaders as heroic, mythic and intended to increase to leadership when is essential. At that time, around the late 1940s, studies on leadership started to consider the trait theory of leadership. This approach had some similarities to Great Man theory as it was derived from the theory. The Great Man Theory of leadership tried to clarify leadership in the view of inheritance. The theory essential concept is that the leader is genetically able with higher qualities that distinguish him from his followers.

Great Man theories accept that the ability for leadership is inherent – that means great leaders are born not made. These theories regularly characterize great leaders as heroic, mythic, and intended to rise to leadership when required. According to (Cherry 2010) the term "Great Man" was used for the reason that, leadership was accepted of mostly as a male quality, especially in terms of military leadership.

At an early age of the twentieth century, several leadership theorists were influenced by (Galton 1870) study of the inherited background of great men. He presented that great leaders inherit their ability to lead. Galton's observations inspired Woods (1913) and studied the history of 14 nations over periods of five to ten centuries to explain the influence of the governing ruler's leadership style on his follower's ordinary of living. His findings identified that the settings of each government were directly related to the abilities of the leaders present. Consequently, a strong leader would accelerate a successful age, despite the fact that a weak leader would be cause for a period of time less comfortable.

Woods (1913) concluded that the leader in accordance with his abilities can makes the nation and shapes it. Wiggam (1931) proposed a method by which great leaders could be retained in sufficiently quantity. He deliberates that an adequate supply of leaders be dependent on a high birth rate among the physically higher titled classes.

As said by Dowd (1936) the leaders are always more intelligent, energetic, and superior than their followers. Jennings (1960) circulated a comprehensive survey of the great man theory of leadership. He claimed that it should be possible to identify these qualities if the leader is brilliant with superior qualities.

3 Trait Theories

The Trait Theory of leadership concentrated on diverse behavior traits with which leaders might be devoted. Green (1994) were studied traits such as weight, height, appearance, intelligence, knowledge, power, and creativity. The theory expected that people inherit certain traits and qualities that distinguish them as great leaders.

The trait theory attempt to categorize the characteristics that distinguish leaders from followers. Trait theory explains that some people are born with certain traits that make them good leaders it means leadership is innate. Traits such as energy, intelligence, honesty, self-confidence, appearance, knowledge, optimism, tolerance of stress, determine when facing problems and result-orientation entirety were considered the characteristics of effective leaders (Yukl 1989; Northouse 2015;Yukl 2011).

As hinted by (Gray and Smeltzer 1989) researchers observed leadership as a trait that could be selected as separate from non-leaders and measured. Stogdill (1948) revised 124 studies based on Trait Theory, despite the fact he finally concluded that the Trait Theory studies were indecisive, he concluded that leaders overdone others in several traits. These are:

1) Intelligence;
2) Scholarship;
3) Dependability;
4) Social Participation;
5) Social and Economic Status.

Even though these determinations were assumed irritating, and later applicable to other leadership studies, Stogdill (1948) determined that leadership could not be adequately defined by the maxims of Trait Theory.

Stogdill expected that effective leadership is reliant on situation as well as the leader's individual characteristics. He established that "a person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits" led to the final reduction of trait leadership research. According to

(Yukl, Van Fleet et al. 1992) in the recent years, leadership theorists have still not found traits as an effective way in explaining leadership.

4 Environmental Theories

Based on other early theorists, the appearance of a great leader is a result of time, place, and circumstance (Mumford 1909;Hocking 1924). These Environmental theorists reserved that the setting, or environment, of the person's activity must be appropriate to inspire leadership to demonstrate (Tead 1935). As said by (Levine 2000) the leadership professions of Lenin, Lincoln, Gandhi, Roosevelt, and Washington are all difficult to separate from the situations of the time and place in which they performed.

Regarding to Tead (1935), every leader is as much a product of the setting of his life and times as of his own desire to exercise power. Bogardus (1918) proposed that the type of a group leadership will develop or accept is clarified by the nature of the group and the problems which must solve. To support this statement, Murphy (1941), struggled that leadership does not exist in a person but is a function of situation.

5 Conclusion

In sum up, the earlier concept of leadership focused on "great men" born with qualities of leadership. The Great Man Theory of leadership attempt to explain leadership on the basis of inheritance. The theory essential concept is that the leader is genetically gifted with superior qualities that differentiate him from his followers. In the early ages of the twentieth century, some leadership theorists were motivated by Galton (1870) study of the inherited background of great men. He expected that great leaders take over their ability to lead to their children through their genes.

In 1900s, the concept of leadership was studied in terms of qualities or traits which distinguished leaders from the followers. The trait theory was based on the expectations that generally people are born with certain special characteristics or traits like intelligence, alertness, scholastic achievement, dependability, persistence, adaptability, relational competence and higher socio- economic status. The existence of above mentioned traits, or specific characteristics apparently assist people to achieve such leadership positions. The search for such

worldwide traits or qualities was finally seen as unusable, because the general approach to leadership seemed to be more important.

The history of leadership theory has been long and different. The current interest among researchers to define and test variables, which contribute to the definition of leadership, is suggestive of the importance which society has usually placed on these investigations. The general literature review concluded that early leadership theories are growing in relevance and that leader taking notice of the benefits.

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