LEADER AND LEADERSHIP: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE TERMS AND CRITICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Leader and leadership are two of the most widely used terms in education and management science research. As a result of their wide use, they have been defined by different researchers and scholars. Because of varied cultural, historical and academic backgrounds of those researchers, these terms have been defined differently. Some of those definitions are focused on one aspect of leader or leadership while the others on the other. This paper critically reviews and analyzes some of the most commonly used definitions of leader and leadership to see their defining characteristics and salient features. Based on the important features of some of those definitions, the paper then comes up

with new definitions for both of them. The paper also looks at some of the similar terms to see how they are different. Finally, the paper analyzes how the term leader might have been misused in the literature. The paper also suggests to be more careful with the selection of words to avoid ambiguity.

Keywords*:* leader, leadership, critical review of literature, historical development

Introduction

Leader is a person who sets goals for his/her people or teammates, and then leads or rallies them to achieve those goals. Leader and Leadership are quite old terms. Stogdill (1950) said that the word "leader" originated back in the 1300s and the word "leadership" in the 1800s (P. 7). It has been defined differently at different times. There are some qualities of a leader that were considered good at one time, but unacceptable at the other. Similarly, characteristics and qualities of a leader may change from region to region. In some societies and regions where there is still tribal culture or at least its influence; the role, responsibilities and attributes of a leader are quite different than what they are in more democratic societies of the world.

Research about leader and leadership is one of the most widespread. It is also getting increasingly diverse as researchers are interested to investigate about it from different dimensions and perspectives. Graen (2004) said that researcher about leadership is "at major crossroads".

This paper critically looks at some of the more prominent definitions of leader and leadership to find their defining characteristic and salient features. Based on those definitions and the need of the current time, the paper comes up with new definitions for both leader and leadership. The paper further examines

some of the related terms for leader, and how the term leader may have been misused in the literature.

Leader: Definitions and Characteristics

Cambridge dictionary defines leader as "a person who manages or controls other people, esp. because of his or her ability or position". This definition of leader appears incomplete as it talks about controlling or managing only. That is something that a manager, boss or administrator would also do.

Napoleon Bonaparte as cited in Definitions of Leadership by Scholars (2019) said, "A leader is a dealer in hope." It is an interesting statement that may explain a very important characteristic of a leader "inspiring and motivating the people, giving them hope". According to it, what separates a leader from a common man is his/her ability to encourage, and bring hope to the people.

Hicks and Gullet (1975) said that a leader was a person who instructed and controlled people in order to secure predefined goals or targets. This definition mainly gives two parameters for a leader: achieving targets, and managing and instructing people.

Cuban (1988) described leaders in these words, "Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others. Frequently they initiate change to reach existing and new goals" (p. 21). This definition seems quite adequate as it not only talks about securing the existing goals, but also creating new ones. Also this definition separates leaders from managers or administrators very clearly by adding the words "shaping…. motivation" as a leader is the one who inspires and motivates others rather than simply making them do things.

Frick (2004) quoted Greenleaf in his article to explain how a leader would behave. He said, "…goes out ahead and shows the way… Leader says, 'I am first, follow me!' even when he knows that the path is uncertain, even dangerous." (p. 1). Here one distinguishing quality of a leader that sets him/her apart from the other people is the ability to go through thick and thin, despite challenges and hardships.

Show, Erickson and Harvey (2011) explained what makes a person a leader in more elaborated way. They said, "Leaders are not always interested in effecting change for the purpose of benefiting the organization and its members as a whole: rather, the leader may be more interested in personal outcomes" (p.575). Here they expounded that the vision and targets of a leader were not for organizational benefits only, but also for the development and growth of the people he/she was working with. The focus of a leader is on human resource development and long term goals than the short term ones.

Khan et al. (2015) said, "Successful leader is one who is flexible to adapt to the differences among the groups and the changing situations". Here flexibility is also added as an important quality of an effective leader.

Javaid and Mirza (2012) emphasized on cognitive and mental ability for a successful leader while Locke and Kirkpatrick (1991) highlighted the importance of high moral and ethical values for a successful leader. Stam, Knippenberg, Wisse, and Pieterse (2018) on the other hand, talked about effective and motivating communication skills of a leader.

Bass (2019) said, "The primary purpose and value of a leader and leadership practice is to inspire others, deemed followers, to willingly engage together to achieve a goal" (p. 1). Here again, key words seem to be "inspire" and "willingly", clearly suggesting a leader is not a dictator, but motivator.

Leaders play a key role in helping an organization in meeting its goals. They are the ones who set its goals and objectives, and lead their team members effectively and efficiently to meet those targets. A leader must have a deep-rooted commitment for the goals no matter how much hardships and difficulties there might be (Kumar, 2011). These days, many leaders are expected, encouraged and even challenged to demonstrate their leadership skills. Leaders are faced with the responsibility of becoming more proficient at leading and finding solutions (Jamison, 2006).

Leadership: Definitions and Characteristics

In the realm of literature, leadership has been defined by many philosophers, intellectuals, researchers and leaders themselves differently. There are numerous definitions of leadership, focusing on different aspects of it. Stogdill (1974) said "There are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who may have attempted to define the concept" (P. 7). The attempt to define what is leadership has inspired the researchers for long (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), but there is not sufficient research from the perspectives of different cultures and context (Ellen, Glinow, & Ann, 1998). In this part of the paper, different key definitions of leadership have been analyzed. Finally based on different aspects of those definitions, the paper comes up with a new one.

Merriam Webster dictionary defines leadership as "capacity to lead" while Oxford Dictionary Online puts leadership as "the set of characteristics that make a good leader". Both the dictionaries put leadership as capacity or set of characteristics that would enable a person to lead. The difference is that whereas Oxford Dictionary talks about leadership as something that makes "a good leader", Merriam Webster talks about leader only.

It has been agreed upon by many researchers that leadership is not a step, but a process (Leadership Theories and Studies, n.d.; Stogdill, 1950; Jacob & Jaques, 1990; Malik, 2012; Kesting, Ulhøi, Song, & Niu, 2016). It is something that one learns and develops with the passage of time. Even leaders, who are considered "inborn leaders", go through this process and their leadership skills increase or decrease with the passage of time.

Kesting et al. (2016) said that leadership was a process by which an individual motivated or influenced others to achieve organizational goals. It is the process of enhancing and encouraging the self-esteem and motivation level of employees to achieve organizational tasks and goals. Motivating employees dependents highly upon the leader and his/her leadership style and skills. "Leadership can be defined as a process by which one individual influences others toward the attainment of group or organizational goals" (Leadership Theories and Studies, n.d., para. 1). Malik (2012) called leadership as a process which was observable, understandable and that touched on personal, organizational and social level. Drucker (1988) said that it influenced others and inspired them to work for the organizational objectives through motivation, and not coercion. Key words in all of these definitions are process, motivation, encouragement, achieving goals, and touching at personal level. That means leadership is creating a bond with the people who are led at personal level so that they are inspired, not forced to achieve the goals and targets.

Stogdill (1950) said that leadership could be taken as a process or act of influencing the work and actions of an organized group to lay down its objectives and achieving them. He pointed out many interesting attributes about leadership in it. First, it is a process. Leadership is not a static quality, but something that is likely to build or improve with the passage of time (or the other way around). Secondly leadership is something that influences or

motivates the team members or the ones who are led. Thirdly leadership does not mean setting the objectives for the members only, but also chalking out the strategy or plan to achieve them. It appears to be a very comprehensive definition with one debatable point i.e. "organized group". In some cases, leadership may also be for a group which is not organized. As Stogdil himself called leadership a process, it may start with some unorganized group or a number of people, but with the passage of time as the leadership grows and matures, the group may also become more organized.

Hemphill and Coons (1957) defined leadership as "the behaviour of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group towards a shared goal" (P. 7). This definition talks about "behaviour" which is also dynamic and kind of a process. Behaviour is not static. It usually changes positively or negatively with the situation or passage of time. They also talked about group rather than organized group which seemed more appropriate. Finally leadership was called "directing the activities" which is a very general and broad term. Directing can also mean forcing or making people do things. Fiedler (1967) also spoke in similar way, saying that leadership was a process to apply power and influence to make people work together and accomplish common goals. This definition can be interesting as "applying power and influence" can also be taken as coercion or forcing.

Katz and Kahn (1978) used these words for leadership, "…the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization." (P. 528). Here again, the term "influential increment" is used which clearly indicates that leadership is a process. Similar to Stogdill (1950)'s use of the term "organized groups" (P.3), they also talked about organization. Kotter (1988) add another dimension to leadership when he said, "The process of moving a group (or groups) in some direction through

mostly non-coercive means." (P.16). Here he talked about "mostly non-coercive means". It is interesting selection of words as he did not say "non-coercive means", but "mostly non-coercive means". Should that imply that coercive and other unfair means may also be used in leadership?

Prentice (1961) put leadership in these words, "Leadership is the accomplishment of a goal through the direction of human assistants. A leader is one who successfully marshals his human collaborators to achieve particular ends." (p. 143). Here "success" has been made an essential quality of a leader and leadership. He talked about "accomplishment of goals" and "successfully marshals" as well. Does it mean that anyone failing to achieve the goals should not be considered a leader? Gardner (1990) also spoke in the same way when he said, "Leadership is the accomplishment of group purpose, which is furthered not only by effective leaders but also by innovators, entrepreneurs, and thinkers; by the availability of resources; by questions of value and social cohesion" (p. 38).

Bass (1990) said,

"Leadership is an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectations of members. Leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group. Any member of the group can exhibit some amount of leadership" (P. 19).

Bass added another dimension to the leadership. According to him, it was not that one person or more have leadership, but multiphase persons in a group could have leadership at different times or in different areas. This concept is different from one-way, top-down leadership concept. Here leadership is more dynamic and revolving, and different people within the same group can assume leadership role depending on the circumstances and the requirement.

Jacob and Jaques (1990) defined leadership as "a process of giving purpose or meaningful direction to collective effort and causing willing effort to be expended to achieve purpose" (P. 281). Rebore and Walmsley (2007) described leadership as "a way of life of dedication to the academic community and profession" (p. 22). Here they gave even broader meanings to the term leadership by talking about "a way of life of dedication", but they limit it too narrowly by talking about "academic community and profession".

Silva (2016) said, "Leadership is the process of interactive influence that occurs when, in a given context, some people accept someone as their leader to achieve common goals" (P.3). Here the focus is on "something accepted" than "forced upon".

Bass (2019) said, "… leadership is a complex combination of human qualities and actions" (p. 1). Due to so many dimensions and features of the term which are not only different, but sometimes contradictory as well; it becomes difficult to come up with a universally accepted definition.

Leader: A New Definition

A leader is supposed to have the ability not just to manage or control the people, but also to inspire them; not only meeting goals and targets, but also able to create new goals and modify the existing ones according to the changing time, needs and challenges. A leader should have the ability to touch the people and create bonding with them beyond formal level.

One very important characteristic of a leader and what really sets him/her apart from a manager or administrator is that a leader builds and develops an organization, group or nation. This phrase points out two things. First is that the focus of a leader is on the building or development of the system, not onto oneself. A leader is the one who is able to rise above oneself

and works for the group, organization or the nation to build and develop it. Second aspect of this is that a leader is the one who builds and develops also; he/she is not limited to merely running it

In the light of all the previously mentioned definitions and these points, this paper defines leader in these words,

"A leader is a person who is able to inspire the human resources. He/She not only meets the current targets and objectives, but also modifies the existing ones and/or creates the new ones according to the newly emerging challenges. A leader focuses on building or developing the organization, group or nation than oneself or merely running it."

Leadership: A New Definition

This papers suggests leadership to be defined as,

"Leadership is a process in which a person or persons inspire(s) and motivate(s) the people to meet the shared goals or objectives which may be changed or added as per the needs and challenges. Leadership connects with the people beyond superficial or formal level, and creates a bond that motivates them to do things rather than forcing them."

This definition incorporates many things such as that leadership can be a shared responsibility, it does not force but inspires (anything that forces, can be administration, bossy attitude, management, dictatorship etc. but not leadership), leadership does not limit itself to the predefined objective or goals but may modify or add new ones according to the situation or needs; and finally it creates a bond with the people beyond official or formal level.

Leader and Other Related Terms

Leader is often confused with some other related terms like coach, boss, administrator or manager. It is important to see the difference between them.

Cambridge dictionary defines coach as "someone whose job is to teach people to improve at a sport, skill, or school subject". Coach helps in improving the skillset, but he or she may not define the goals. Usually the goals are already defined and targets are set, and a coach helps a person in improving the skills for those objectives. A coach may or may not be a leader. Similarly a leader may or may not be a coach. These two terms cannot be used interchangeably all the times.

Boss is defined by Cambridge dictionary as "the person who is in charge of an organization and who tells others what to do". The difference between a boss and a leader is again quite clear here. Boss may not have the power to define or redefine objectives. Also the boss "tells" while a leader not only tells, he/she also inspires and motivates. Boss and other related terms are often used with negative connotation such as "bossy attitude", "don't be a boss" etc. Leader, on the other hand, is taken in a positive way.

Comparing administrators and leaders, Reilly (2015) said, "Leaders deal from their hearts as well as their minds; administrators work almost exclusively from the mental framework". As it was explained before, leaders inspire and motivate the people, creating a bonding with them; while administrators are more to focus on getting the assigned tasks done. They value tasks, assignments, rules and organizations above human beings. Leaders work at policy level and make key decision while administrators are responsible for day to day affairs, and make routine, everyday decision. Managers work in the same way as administrators, but have more control and decision making powers; yet they are limited to managing things and people.

Leader or Not a Leader

It is quite interesting how the term leader has been used so frequently in the literature these days. In the schools for example, every principal, head teacher or school-head is called leader regardless of the fact if he/she has leadership qualities or not (Dahar, Faize, Niwaz, Hussain, & Zaman, 2010; Niazi, 2012; Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013)

. An organization or educational institution head may be an administrator, manager, boss, principal or school-head, but how appropriate it is to assume that they are "leader" as well. Reilly (2015) described it perfectly in these words, "While every school has at least one administrator, few have leaders". Same is the case with business organization which always has head, manager or boss; but rarely a leader. As mentioned earlier in the new definition of a leader, a leader is one who not just runs an institute or organization, but builds or develops it as well. Also in many a situation, those *leaders* are self-centered and self-focused. Rather than building or developing the organization or institution, they try to build and develop themselves only. Their focus is on "self" than "system". Such people do not lead (a dynamic process that implies growth, movement), but remain stuck to themselves (something static). Should the ones who are stuck at a place (and hence keep the organization in the same state) or keep revolving around themselves, be called leader (one who *leads*)?

It is also argued often that once a person is put in a position where he/she is to lead an organization or institution, he/she is a leader. This paper suggests that the words could be used more carefully and judiciously. Being head is different from being a leader. Similarly running an organization or institution does not essentially mean leading it. A person, who is formally put in a position to run a school or organization, may be a school head, organizational head, administrator, manager, boss or principal. It should not be assumed

automatically that by holding a position where one is responsible for running an organization, one becomes leader as well. Literature should use specific words, and be careful about the difference between running, managing and leading an organization. In case one is responsible for running an organization; it may be more suitable to use terms like school-head, organizational head, administrator, manager etc..

Research about leadership styles often takes it for granted that every organizational or school head is a "leader", and now that study only has to find out which kind of leadership style he/she has or identifying its relationship/impact with other variables (Bogler, 2001; Kythreotis, 2006; Ali & Waqar, 2013). It is suggested that all such studies should first try to find out if those "leaders" are leaders at all before classifying them into different categories or exploring their styles.

Conclusion

Leader and leadership have been defined over the years by numerous researchers, philosophers and leaders themselves. Due to varied personal choices, geographical, philosophical, historical and cultural influences; the terms have many variations and shades. This paper looked at some of the most important definitions and critically analyzed them. Finally based on different elements from the previous ones, the paper came up with new definitions for both leader and leadership.

The term leader has started to be used quite frequently in the literature. A lot of research about school principals for example rushes to find out what kind of leadership style the principal(s) has without investigating if the said person is indeed a leader or just an administrator, manager, boss or head. The

paper suggests that in all such studies, first it should be explored if the person understudy is indeed a leader before identifying the leadership styles.

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