



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation.

Situational approaches of leadership in the school system

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Article Info

ISSN (online): 2582-7138

Volume: 03

Issue: 05

September-October 2022

Received: 20-09-2022

Accepted: 06-10-2022

Page No: 583-588

Abstract

This paper x-rayed situational approaches' of leadership in the school system. it saw situational approaches of leadership as that leadership style that operates on the circumstances of varying situation to achieve predetermined goals. The role of school administrators is very important in achieving an educational goal through improving staff performance with respect to understanding their needs. The adoption of situation leadership style in the educational administration ensures that the leaders understand the various situation and the needs of the staff which determines their motivation level to achieve maximum productivity. The paper enumerated the historical development of situational leadership styles and went ahead to x-ray the guiding principle in situational leadership style includes; delegating, participating, selling and telling. The paper also indicated that the features of situational approaches which include; flexible, skilled at supervising, nurturing when it comes to coaching, participation oriented, adept at delegating, insightful and trustworthy and among others. The paper concluded that situational leadership style provides several alternatives leadership styles to school leaders to enhance staff performance. The paper went ahead to suggest that the school administrators should master the various leadership styles in order to know the situation that demands a particular one as well as identify the need of the staff in order to motivate them for more productivity.

Keywords: Leadership, situation, historical, application, features, advantages, disadvantages

Introduction

Leadership is an interesting concept that is directly affecting the behaviors of communities, groups and followers. Many theories evolved, giving birth to different styles of leadership, and each one of these styles leads into a distinct behavior inside the organization. Situational leadership states that for the leader to be successful, he/she has to be task oriented and relationship oriented. Therefore this paper will focus on both work needs and employee needs and wants. (Blanchard K., 2010) [3]. Situational leadership is a leadership theory that merges both directive and supportive dimensions, and each of these dimensions is to be applied correctly in a given situation. Leaders operating under the Situational Leadership theory have to assess their employees through evaluating their commitment to accomplish a certain task. Situational leadership means that leaders have to change the degree of supportiveness and directness to their employee according to the given situation of subordinates and their level of motivation. This type of Leadership demand that leaders vary their behavior and leadership style according to their subordinate's commitment. (Kindle, 2009) [8] Situational leadership is the mixture task behavior, worker commitment and relation behavior. Studies show that the success of situational leadership style is related to the combination of these three components must happen; it allows openness between leaders and members in addition to ensure an independence and competence in employee's decision. A situational leader tries to discover the characteristics of his/her follower in order to know which leadership style to use with him/her. (Farmer, 2012) [6] Moreover, situational leaders are known for giving appropriate guidance and task support for their subordinates in order to accomplish the desired goals successfully. This type of leader must also handle problems innovatively and quickly in order to overcome them. This, according to studies, is highly correlated with the improvement of employee's productivity. (Cnaff & Wright, 2013) [4].

Situational theories of leadership work on the assumption that the most effective style of leadership changes from situation to situation. To be most effective and successful, a leader must be able to adapt his style and approach to diverse circumstances. For example, some employees function better under a leader who is more autocratic and directive. For others, success will be more likely if the leader can step back and trust his team to make decisions and carry out plans without the leader's direct involvement. On a similar note, not all types of industries and business settings require the same skills and leadership traits in equal measure. Some fields demand a large measure of innovation, whereas in others, personal charisma and relational connection with clients are far more important.

The situational theory states that no leadership style is the best but it depends on the situation. It emphasizes the importance of both the leaders' personality and the situation in which different variables in a specific setting that determine the style of leadership best suited for the said situation. It is founded on the principle that no one leadership style is applicable to all situations. Renowned leadership researchers Hodgson and White believe that the best form of leadership is one that finds the perfect balance between behaviors, needs, and context. Good leaders not only possess the right qualities but they're also able to evaluate the needs of their followers and the situation at hand. In summary, the situational theory suggests that great leadership is a combination of many key variables (Omoluabi, 2016) ^[13]. The situational leadership emphasizes different variables in a specific setting that determine the style of leadership best suited for the said situation. It is founded on the principle that no one leadership style is applicable to all situations. Renowned leadership researchers Hodgson and White believe that the best form of leadership is one that finds the perfect balance between behaviors, needs, and context. Good leaders not only possess the right qualities but they're also able to evaluate the needs of their followers and the situation at hand. In summary, the contingency theory suggests that great leadership is a combination of many key variables.

Historical Development of Situational Leadership Style

Leadership experts Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard developed the situational leadership model in their 1969 best-selling book, "Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources." This book by Hersey and Blanchard has sold millions of copies and has had a profound effect on the business world. Since its introduction, the Hersey Blanchard model has been adopted globally by hundreds of Fortune 500 companies. Blanchard and Hersey are well known across the business and leadership world for the situational leadership theory, and Blanchard and Hersey both have taken roles as leaders in business theory. Blanchard and Hersey are credited with developing a theory that gives business owners the skills and readiness level to change their industries.

Situational Approaches of Leadership

The situational leadership approach is a resource to explain why one leader is effective under certain situation but not others. Additionally, it is important that a person who has a very charismatic personality and trusts his charisma does not simply use his or her preferred leadership style in a new situation (Fairholm & Fairholm, 2009) ^[5]. As stated by Hersey and Blanchard (2007) ^[7], Situational Leadership

model concludes that no unique leadership style is suitable for all situations. This is due to the fact that, leaders must meet employee's needs and wants to ensure their satisfaction, as increased satisfaction in work, and leaders' interest in fulfilling his follower's interests and wants, are proven to affect employee's productivity positively. The second reason is the leader's need to keep up-to-date with his/her employee's development, as his knowledge in his work increases in time, commitment to get tasks done gets stronger, and ability to perform tasks gets better. As a conclusion, the Situational Leadership Model suggests that leaders should adapt their style according to employee's readiness and development level (Hersey & Blanchard, 2007) ^[7]. Hersey added that situational leaders should be flexible, change according to situations, know how to direct and coach, and to encourage teams to participate in decision making when their readiness is high.

To determine the best approach to some situation, it might seem reasonable to just look at the approach taken by other successful and unsuccessful leaders in a similar situation. However, differences in organizational complexity between situations will often make this impossible. Hence, leaders need to be able to adapt to the situation instead of just copying other supposedly successful strategies. It is true that a style of leadership does not work in all situations, hence a successful leader should work with diverse styles of leadership based on "the appropriate" time and place. In other words, effective leaders in all parts of organizations are able to "master" all leadership styles, and recognize where and when should be used (Fairholm & Fairholm, 2009) ^[5].

The guiding principle in this leadership style is that for a leader to be successful, they need to be adaptable, knowing when to use one of four task-based styles at any given moment.

- **Delegate.** Allows teams to take responsibility for decisions. Characterized by the ability to delegate tasks to employees with a propensity for working independently. Leadership's guidance spurs a team or individual's maturity.
- **Participate.** Emphasizes shared ideas and decisions. Effective in leading employees who, although experienced, might lack the confidence to complete assigned tasks.
- **Sell.** Leadership has to persuade team members who have the ability but who might be unwilling to take on the task.
- **Tell.** Leadership has to provide explicit direction and supervise work closely. Often used in managing new team members.

Using Goleman's emotional intelligence model, six situational leadership styles can be identified (Kubiak, 2012) ^[9].

Visionary or Authoritative leader refers to someone who is an expert with enough knowledge, experience, and knows how to achieve objective results that he can help organizations improve themselves based on market needs. When leaders encounter with a workgroup who is inexperienced; the authoritative leadership style is the most effective one.

Coaching in which the tasks and roles of followers have been defined clearly. Two-way communication is the fundamental part of effective coaching style leadership when followers

have enough experience and accept what needs to be done.

Affiliative in which the responsibility for team building when followers' morale is low is crucial. The affiliative leader can act toward promoting harmony and help to get real data about problems to assist in trying to solve them.

Democratic (see Table 4), which is required when followers are knowledgeable. This style of leadership has a democratic approach and gives their followers equal opportunity for decision making.

Pacesetting (see Table 5), which is best when followers of an organization are skilled and their motivation is high. The pacesetter leader is suggested because the pacesetter leaders have high work standard for themselves and for subordinates.

Commanding/Coercive (see Table 6), which is contrary to the democratic one. Leaders using this style prefer getting results by non-democratic and bullying means. In organizations that require a fast turnaround, the coercive leaders are successful at least in the short term. In the long term this style can damage the subordinates' morale.

One of the strengths of situational leadership theory is the test of time in the marketplace. Situational leadership is meant for training leaders within organizations. To be practical is the second strength of situational leadership, and it is easy to intuitively understand, and apply in a diversity of settings. Some leadership approaches purvey sophisticated ways and are complex for assessing administrators own leadership behavior, such as the decision-making approach suggested by Vroom and Yetton, unlike situational leadership. A third strength of situational leadership is its prescriptive value. Even though some leadership theories are descriptive in their nature, situational leadership is a prescriptive one. A fourth strength of situational leadership emphasizes leader flexibility in different situations. Leaders prefer and need to find out their subordinates' needs then their leadership model can be matched with them. Finally, situational leadership reminds us to select diverse style of treatments based on the subordinates' task, responsibility, and new skills which help them to become more confident in their work. One of the criticisms of situational leadership is the number of research studies about it. Only a few studies have been carried out to justify the propositions and assumptions (Vecchio, Bullis, & Brazil, 2006) ^[19]. The vague conceptualization of the subordinates' development levels can be the second criticism of this approach. The authors in this field do not talk clearly about how competence is incorporated with commitment to form six distinct levels of development ^[20]. According to Northouse, this theory does not illustrate the theoretical foundation for changes between each of the development levels. Finally, typical questionnaires analyze diverse job situations and try to determine the perfect leadership style for each by just asking respondents. This is not an effective means of determining the appropriate leadership style.

Applications of Situational Theory of Leadership in Educational Administration

1. Educational organization like the school constitutes people, situation and task. School head-teachers should study the various situations and seek for ways of organizing the entire school to achieve the goals of education.
2. In schools there are different situations due to differences manifesting in the members themselves, hence the principals need to be aware of various leadership styles.

3. School comprises different categories of people with different levels of intelligence, knowledge, experience, exposure and inclinations. And schools are of different types, dissimilar nature, and divergent standard as well as diversified objectives. Hence, the school administrator must be aware of the different ways of responding to situations.
4. The differences in school administration imply that managing school administration demands that, the school head must be conversant with the various leadership styles.
5. Similarly the leadership approach that befits a Boys' Secondary School may not be in congruence with that of a Girls' Secondary School. The Nigerian state, being a land of diversity and the school being a reflection of the society signifies that a different approach is inevitable if effectiveness and productivity are to be realized in managing different school organizations.
6. The implication of this is that the difference in the social ethos and dissimilar life styles of different communities in which different categories of schools are located, should guide the head- teacher to decide on the most appropriate leadership style to be employed.
7. The changes in the application of leadership style depend on the contingent school circumstances, the nature of the task as well as the people. It is not out of place to note that, it is indispensable to the head- teacher to carefully study the personnel in the school; teaching and non-teaching, the school's objectives, the group norms and values and the nature of the different tasks in the school before deciding on the appropriate leadership approach.
8. This theory could serve as a solution to issues of disobedience with school teachers. This of course demands that the principal have to change his leadership to match that of the situation.

Principal's Situational Leadership Style and Organizational Commitment

Although a large number of studies exploring principals' leadership style and teachers' commitment across the world were performed, the study of situational leadership and commitment of teachers are very modest in ensuring that teachers deliver their services effectively, hence; teachers and the role they play in the educative process are central to basic education particularly in the third world countries. According to Hersey and Blanchard (2007) ^[7], situational leadership is a behavioral practice in which leaders select their leadership style to best fit the situation and readiness level of their followers. A similar expression was made by Northouse (2004) ^[11] and Thompson and Glaso (2015) ^[16] that situational leadership studies the desires of their followers and then applies their leadership style accordingly. In a nutshell, situational leadership is all about understanding the needs and potential of their subordinates to enhance organizational goals. According to Ahmad and Oranye (2010), organizational commitment is characterized as a trend of "emotion, morale and rationality" in any individual. It is characterized by the "loyalty and support" of employees towards their organization (Baotham *et al.*, 2010) ^[1]. Therefore, the particular emotional attachment such as loyalty, trust, and values make the key characteristics of teachers' commitment. The importance of the principal's situational leadership was widely acknowledged in the educational field in understanding academic achievement

(Raza & Sikandar, 2018) ^[14], job satisfaction, teachers' work performance and productivity, teachers' professionalis and teachers' commitment. Yet, very little is known on the relation to teacher's organizational commitment. All those empirical examinations depict that principals' situational leadership behavior does have some relationship and influence on school organization either through teachers or students. As a consequence, it is worth investigating the influence of principals' leadership behavior on teachers' organizational commitment. The birth of the theory took place in 1969 after Hersey and Blanchard published a journal titled "Life Cycle Theory of Leadership". Since then, the theory has been continually developed and researched until it is in its current form (Hersey & Blanchard, 2007) ^[7]. It is an extension of "Tannenbaum and Schmidt's leadership continuum", "Blake and Mouton's managerial grid", and "Reddin's three-dimensional leadership style". The situational leadership theory pointed out two key leadership behaviors: "task behavior" and "relationship behavior". Task behavior refers to leaders' engagement in spelling out the duties and responsibilities to an individual or group through one-way communication, whereas, the relationship behavior involves leaders' engagement in two-way or multi-way communication to perform tasks. Also, the situational leadership model is classified into four quadrants referred to as "directing, coaching, supporting, and delegating" that leaders should apply based on employees' readiness level indicated as "low, moderate, high, and very high readiness". Consequently, as group member readiness increases, a leader should rely more on relationship behavior and less on-task behavior (Hersey & Blanchard, 2007) ^[7]. The four quadrants are identified in the succeeding statement. First, directing style (style 1) is referred to as "high task, low relationship style". Hersey and Blanchard (2007) ^[7] stated that leaders must apply this style if the employees are low in both "motivation and ability" to perform tasks. The leader needs to tell more on task achievement and maintain a low relationship. Second is the coaching style (style 2) known as "high task, high relationship style". In this style, the leader provides considerable input about task completion but also emphasizes human relationships. It is more suitable when subordinates have "adequate motivation, but low ability" (Hersey & Blanchard, 2007) ^[7]. Third, is the supporting style (style 3) which is regarded as "high relationship and low task behavior". The leaders give less direction, but there is more collaboration between the leader and group members. It is effective when subordinates have "adequate ability but low motivation". Finally, is the delegating style which is characterized by "low relationship and low task behavior". The leader usually delegates responsibility for a task to a group member and is simply kept informed of progress. It is effective when subordinates are very high in ability and motivation (Hersey & Blanchard, 2007) ^[7]. In summary, the key concept of leadership style is that effective leadership happens when the appropriate leadership style matches the readiness level of employees. For this reason, the leaders need to understand the employees' ability and willingness to perform the specific task assigned. Since, the organization consisted of different individuals with variations in knowledge, experiences, and skills, the leader must assign the specific task based on maturity and readiness level. Therefore, the application of each leadership style should be chosen appropriately that matches both ability and willingness of an employee. For the organizational commitment of

employees, the study adopted three dimensions of the organizational commitment model namely: affective, continuance, and normative commitment developed by Myer and Allen in 1991. According to the authors, an "affective commitment" is the psychological attachment of employees towards their organization. Generally, it consists of coworkers' beliefs and ideals in line with organizational goals and values. On the other hand, "normative commitment" is regarded as the extent of the employee's conviction on the organization and the readiness to make substantial hard work for the assistance of the organization, while "continuance commitment" is perceived as the costs connected with leaving the organization.

Features of Situational Leadership

Situational leaders share several characteristics and skills in common, including but certainly not limited to the following:

- **Flexible:** There's no fixed way of leading when it comes to situational leadership. The style changes according to what's needed to get the job done. If the development level of a team or individual is low, the situational leader focuses more on tasks. If the individuals are satisfactorily developed, the leader will play more of a supporting role.
- **Skilled at supervising:** Effective situational leaders can immediately recognize when they have to supervise and when they can comfortably step back. For example, with new team members just learning the ropes, the leader may have to provide constant supervision and specific instructions about business objectives and how they need to be accomplished.
- **Nurturing when it comes to coaching.** In giving direction for a project, the leader will include encouragement and nurturing, which benefit not only the employee but also the task at hand. A well-coached employee is bound to do a better job, and the situational leader fully understands this.
- **Participation oriented:** Situational managers often let teams make decisions. This encourages them to work independently, fosters trust, and makes team members feel like they are an important driver in the decision-making process.
- **Adept at delegating.** Delegating can be a situational leader's best friend. When a team is given freedom to tackle an assignment on their own, they feel more empowered and encouraged to bring their A game. And by granting this freedom to the team, the leader is freed up to focus on other responsibilities since they don't always have to engage in the daily activities of the team.
- **Insightful and trustworthy:** Skilled situational leaders understand the needs of teams and team members and can swiftly adjust their management style to fill those needs. They are also able to gain their followers' trust, which takes a high level of maturity.
- **Full of integrity:** True situational leaders are thoughtful, big-picture thinkers. When they have to shift management styles per situation, they take into account the maturity level of team members and their readiness level, an organization's structure and culture, and the goals to be achieved.
- **Courageous:** Some leaders stick with a single way of running things. Not so with situational leaders, who have the maturity to take chances and actually thrive on adopting a variety of management styles when needed.

Situational Leadership Approach and Team Teaching

Situational approach to leadership uses levels of supportive and directive behavior (Ochunski, 2001) ^[12]. Of all the leadership theories discussed, thus, far situational leadership is the most relatable to team teaching. One reason is that it is easy to conceptualize and can be applied in all leadership levels (Northouse, 2012) ^[10]. In the case of team teachers, the behaviors can be reciprocal. When thinking about team teaching, when one teacher is delegating (low support and low directive), the other teacher is invited to lead the lesson, and therefore, becomes more team teaching than co-teaching. Using diagrams on the four leadership styles in situational leadership created by, ideas of team teaching were incorporated to create a framework. Using the four styles of situational leadership, we can better understand the roles teachers are playing in the classroom. The four styles include delegating, supporting, coaching, and directing and are highly profitable by measuring the level of supportive and directive behaviour a leader demonstrates. The combination of support and delegating suggesting a more balanced and equal approach, and thus, better fits a co-teaching definition.,

Advantages and Disadvantages of Situational Approaches to Leadership

This theory allows good leaders to use whichever leadership skills and style best fits their current situation. But does this always work? Here's a look at some of its advantages and disadvantages as noted by Thompson and Glasø, (2018) ^[17].

Pros

- Can change your style at your own discretion at any time.
- Easy-to-apply concept: quickly assess a situation then decide what fits best.
- Four ways to lead rather than one.
- Makes employees feel more valued because it addresses and supports their needs.
- Considerate of employee development and helpful in addressing skill level and needs.

Cons

- Could cause confusion if a leader constantly changes their approach.
- Might neglect long-term goals since it typically focuses on short-term goals.
- Its flexible nature may not bode well in work environments with repetitive tasks.
- Requires the ability to assess an employee's maturity level. If leaders aren't skilled at this, they risk making choices that don't suit a team or individual.
- Could risk putting too much responsibility on the manager, whose decisions aren't always sound.

Conclusion

Leadership is the art of influencing workers to work willingly and enthusiastically for group goal accomplishment. The several alternatives available to every leader to make a choice in order to develop his employees and mobilize them to get the work done makes it possible for the school leaders to make an effective choice of leadership in leading the staff under them for effective service delivery. School leaders influence subordinates to contribute effectively in the manner that all strive towards the achievement of educational goals. This study is basically a review of the leadership skills,

leadership style and their approaches and impact on workers performance. The paper reveals that in order for any organization to succeed in actualizing its goals and objectives, there must be a good leader with the knowledge of various leadership styles to apply it on appropriate situations for the attainment of educational goals and objectives. The acquisition of leadership different skills was also proved to be very important for a leader to lead well and with positive impact on the school system.

Suggestions

From the discussions above, the following are suggested:

- The school administrators should master the various leadership styles in order to know the situation that demands a particular one.
- Every staff has its own peculiar need, the school head must identify these need in order to motivate the staff for more productivity.
- The school administrators should also establish a cordial relationship with the staff in order to create the right environment to motivate them.
- The school leaders should at all times support the staff in achieving the goal of the school system as enunciated by situational approach.
- The school administrators should effectively direct the staff under them so that they could be guided to achieve the aims and objectives of education.

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