



Analysis of Leadership Theories in Health Organization

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Abstract:

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Contemporary health care organizations in both the private and public sectors are in need of revolutionary and transformational change. This paper provides a brief summary of an amalgamation of leadership theories as applicable to a for-profit, not-for-profit, or governmental health care organization. This article concludes that no single leadership theory is applicable to all situations; therefore, it is important to understand the environment (situation) and the followers in order to apply the best leadership style that fits the situation.

Keywords: *Health Care, Leadership Models, Leadership style, Leadership Theory, Organizational leadership*

1. Introduction

Contemporary health care organizations in both the private and public sectors are in need of revolutionary, transformational change. Incremental change and modest improvements won't be enough. Everything must be done better, smarter, and faster while doing more with less and building organizations that attract and retain talented leaders and staff (Warrick, 2011). Consequently, an effective leader is a leader who provides vision and a sense of mission, instills pride, gains respect, and inspires and motivates followers to achieve desired organizational objectives (Shanker & Sayeed, 2011). Therefore, to facilitate the optimal functioning of health care organizations, employees need to be managed and governed effectively. It is also important that leaders or management in health care organization set the right tone and establish, implement, and evolve the mission, vision, and philosophy of the organization. This paper provides a brief summary of an amalgamation of leadership theories and highlights the significance of transformational, servant and situational leadership models, as applicable to for-profit, not-for-profit, and governmental health care organizations.

2. Types of Leadership

Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2007). Further, Nahavandi (2009) asserts that leadership is a group phenomenon, and that there can be no leaders without followers. One of my favorite definitions of leadership was provided by Melchar & Bosco (2010), who define leadership at the strategic level as how leaders develop and facilitate the achievement of the mission and vision, develop values required for long-term success and implement these via appropriate actions and behaviors. Leaders are also personally involved in ensuring that the organization's management system is developed and implemented in health care. As such, leadership always involves interpersonal influence or persuasion. Due to the complexity and the dynamic nature of the health care organizations in the 21st century, every health care organization requires an effective leadership to stay competitive. Consequently, this paper highlights the significance of transformational, servant and situational leadership models, as applicable to for-profit, not-for-profit, and governmental health care organizations.

2.1 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership describes a process by which leaders bring about significant positive changes in individuals, groups, teams, and organizations by using inspiration, vision, and the ability to motivate followers to transcend their self-interests for a collective purpose (Warrick, 2011). There are four components of transformational leadership model namely: idealized influence, inspiration and motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. A brief explanation of the four components include: Idealized influence as the process where the leader provides a clear vision and mission, instills pride in what needs to be accomplished, and gains respect and trust from leading with high moral and ethical standards. Inspiration and motivation involve communicating high expectations, adding meaning to goals and undertakings, using symbols to focus efforts, expressing important purposes in simple ways, doing things to keep people motivated. Intellectual stimulation is when leadership involves encouraging new and better ways of doing things, fostering creativity, re-examining assumptions, promoting intelligence, rationality, and problem solving, and last, Individual consideration *is* when a leader demonstrates and shows a personal interest in employees and their development (Warrick, 2011).

2.2 Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is defined by Melchar & Bosco (2010), as serving others by working toward their development and well being in order to meet goals for the common good. Further, servant leadership can be described as the type of leadership that allows the leader to distance himself from using power, influence and position to serve self, and instead gravitating to a position where these instruments are used to empower, enable and encourage those who are within one's circle of influence (Melchar & Bosco, 2010).

Servant leaders trust followers to act in the best interests of the health care organization and focus on those followers rather than the organizational objectives. Followership development is paramount in the minds of servant leaders. Moreover, servant leadership moves beyond the competency inputs and performance outputs traditionally used to measure leader effectiveness – emphasizing instead the moral, emotional, and relational dimensions of ethical leadership behaviors (Reed, Vidaver-Cohen, & Colwell, 2011). It is a type of leadership that combines both transformational and transactional leadership attributes). This type of leadership empowers followers by trusting in their ability to protect the interests of the health care organization. It is pertinent to note that organizations that can create a healthy, servant-minded culture will maximize the skills of both their workforce and leadership in serving clients or patients. Servant leaders are influential in a non-traditional manner that allows more freedom for followers to exercise their own abilities consistent with the qualities in the employee fulfillment (Melchar & Bosco, 2010).

2.3 Situational Leadership

According to Northouse (2007, p. 91), “the premise of the situational theory is that different situations demand different kinds of leadership”. Therefore, to be an effective leader requires that a person adapt his or her style to the demands in health care industry. Further, changing situational variables and problematic scenarios require situational leadership to respond to unexpected situations in health care industry like the bombing of the World Trade Center on 9/11/01 (Burrell, Omar, Rahim, Huff, & Finkela, 2010). Situational leadership is appropriate when an unexpected event occurs. The four components of situational leadership are: (a) Leadership is composed of both directional and supportive dimensions, (b). Effective leaders match the competence of followers to the task at hand depending on the situation, (c). Different situations demand different kinds of leadership, and (d). Situational leaders must be flexible, innovative and adaptive to changing needs. Based on the above premise, it is reasonable to assume that effective leaders are those who can recognize what employees need and then adapt their own style to meet those needs for effective service delivery in health care. According to Burrell et al, (2010), situational leadership requires a combination of leadership styles in crisis situation, such as skills in project management, emergency response planning, logistic management, crisis communications, action planning and delegation. In fact, situational leadership provides a leader with understanding of the unique needs of subordinates who have direct access to clients or patients in any health care management.

3. Conclusion and Recommendation

This article concludes that no single leadership theory is applicable to all situations; therefore, it is important to understand the environment (situation) and the followers in order to apply the best leadership style that fits the situation. However, the above mentioned leadership models are appropriate for for-profit, not-for-profit, or governmental health care organizations, in different health care settings to achieve organizational objectives. Nevertheless, our preference is transformational leadership as it is the most effective leadership model among the management that is capable of motivating employees to bring about positive outcomes in health care organization.

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