



Leadership Activity Workshop

Overview:

In this workshop students will become familiar with different ways of exercising leadership, their own strengths and weaknesses, and how they can best work with others in a leadership context. They will learn and apply leadership skills in a hands-on practical way that encourages them to challenge their own beliefs and assumptions about what constitutes leadership. Topics include development of leadership theories, personal assessment and development, values and ethics, motivation, power, followership, group dynamics, multiculturalism in leadership, conflict resolution, performance excellence, and the change process. Through a process of readings, self-discovery, group observations, and case studies, the student will identify, observe, analyze, and apply new leadership behaviors. This workshop is based on the premise that each student will face a variety of leadership challenges in life. The way in which these challenges are met, whether as a formal leader or a member of a team, can have a significant impact on the individual and the community at large.

Introduction: (30 minutes)

Introduce the concept of leadership to your classroom. After you have introduced this concept, discuss each of the eight leadership theories.

1. **The Great Man Theory:** The great man theory assumes that the capacity for leadership is inherent – that great leaders are born, not made. These theories often portray great leaders as heroic, mythic and destined to rise to leadership when needed. The term "Great Man" was used because, at the time, leadership was thought of primarily as a male quality, especially in terms of military leadership. Learn more about the great man theory of leadership.
2. **The Trait Theory:** The trait theory is similar to the great man theory, because it assumes that people inherit certain qualities and traits that make them better able to lead. The trait theory often identifies a particular personality or behavioral characteristics shared by leaders. If particular traits are key features of leadership, then how do we explain people who possess those qualities but are not leaders? This question is one of the difficulties in using trait theories to explain leadership.
3. **Contingency Theories:** Contingency theories of leadership focus on particular variables related to the environment that might determine which particular style of leadership is best suited for the situation. According to this theory, no leadership style is best in all situations. Success depends upon a number of variables, including the leadership style, qualities of the followers and aspects of the situation.
4. **Situational Theories:** Situational theories propose that leaders choose the best course of action based upon situational variables. Different styles of leadership may be more appropriate for certain types of decision-making.
5. **Behavioral Theories:** Behavioral theories of leadership are based upon the belief that great leaders are made, not born. Rooted in behaviorism, this leadership theory focuses on the actions of leaders not on mental qualities or internal states. According to this theory, people can *learn* to become leaders through teaching and observation.

6. **Participative Theories:** Participative leadership theories suggest that the ideal leadership style is one that takes the input of others into account. These leaders encourage participation and contributions from group members and help group members feel more relevant and committed to the decision-making process. In participative theories, however, the leader retains the right to allow the input of others.
7. **Management Theories:** Management theories, also known as transactional, focus on the role of supervision, organization and group performance. These theories base leadership on a system of rewards and punishments. Managerial theories are often used in business; when employees are successful, they are rewarded; when they fail, they are reprimanded or punished. Learn more about theories of transactional leadership.
8. **Relationship Theories:** Relationship theories, also known as transformational theories, focus upon the connections formed between leaders and followers. Transformational leaders motivate and inspire people by helping group members see the importance and higher good of the task. These leaders are focused on the performance of group members, but also want each person to fulfill his or her potential. Leaders with this style often have high ethical and moral standards.

Before moving on to the next section, ask a couple of students whether or not they think that one theory is more useful than another in defining, describing, and explaining leadership.

Group Exercise: (15-20 minutes)

Call upon five or six students to individually lead the classroom in a group activity. The activity can be simple or complex. For example, the leader can call upon the classroom to line up alphabetically, sing a song, or participate in some action.

After each student has led the classroom in a group activity, ask the classroom the following questions:

1. Did the leaders succeed in their task?
2. What was the hardest part about leading a group of people?
3. Is it important to have direction and guidance?
4. Where there differences in leadership styles?
5. How did these different styles affect the success of the activity?
6. What were some positive traits or characteristics of each leader?

Leadership Styles: (10 minutes)

There are four main leadership styles:

1. **Autocratic:** The leader takes the decisions and announces them; expecting subordinates to carry them out without question (the Telling style).
2. **Persuasive:** At this point on the scale the leader also takes all the decisions for the group without discussion or consultation but believes that people will be better motivated if they are persuaded that the decisions are good ones. He or she does a lot of explaining and 'selling' in order to overcome any possible resistance to what he or she wants to do. The leader also puts a lot of energy into creating enthusiasm for the goals he or she has set for the group (the Selling style).
3. **Consultative:** In this style the leader confers with the group members before taking decisions and, in fact, considers their advice and their feelings when framing

decisions. He or she may, of course, not always accept the subordinates' advice but they are likely to feel that they can have some influence. Under this leadership style the decision and the full responsibility for it remain with the leader but the degree of involvement by subordinates in decision taking is very much greater than telling or selling styles (the Consulting style).

4. Democratic: Using this style the leader would characteristically lay the problem before his or her subordinates and invite discussion. The leader's role is that of conference leader, or chair, rather than that of decision taker. He or she will allow the decision to emerge out of the process of group discussion, instead of imposing it on the group as its boss (the Joining style).

Group Project: (20 – 30 minutes)

Examine four or five famous leaders, applying concepts and theories explored in this course.

Conclusion: (10 – 15 minutes)

Questions for Leadership Reflection and Dialogue

1. Is leadership a specialized role within an office, department, team or other group, OR is it a shared influence process that occurs naturally within a social system and is diffused within any members?
2. Is leadership more of a cognitive, rational process OR do the emotional and value-based aspects of leadership account for more of the influence process of leadership?
3. Should leadership decisions be made in more of a top-down formal process OR should decisions be based on a bottom-up political process?
4. Is it more important for the leader to focus on building friendly, supportive and consultative relationships with their followers OR is it more important for the leader to initiate organizational structure, maintain standards of performance, and insure that followers are following policies and procedures?
5. Which is more important to leadership: the relationship with the followers OR getting the job (task) done?
6. Are certain leadership traits optimal for all situations OR do different situations require different attributes?
7. Can you think of an individual who has abused his or her role as a leader?
8. Why is it important that each and everyone of us act as a leader?