Participative, Transformational, and Transactional Leadership in the United Kingdom, Nigeria and France

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes participative, transformational and transactional leadership theories and how each theory might or might not work in the United Kingdom, Nigeria, and France. Application of the three leadership theories emphasizes performance orientation as an important requirement across the three national cultures. A number of issues are readily identifiable with the application of each theory across the three national cultures. With participative leadership, issues of time intensity, information sensitivity, and size of the labor force are unavoidable. Issues with transformational leadership include measurement difficulties and anti-democracy; while issues with transactional leadership include the need to maintain status quo and the use of rewards and punishment to achieve results. Cultures may influence leadership styles, it is however not a determinant of leadership behavior. This is in consonance with the findings of the GLOBE study which found that leadership behavior is not a function of national culture values.

Keywords: *Leadership, Culture, Transformational, Transactional, Participative*

1.   INTRODUCTION

This paper describes participative, transformational and transactional leadership theories and compares/contrast the application of the three leadership theories in the United Kingdom, France and Nigeria. In practice, a number of issues are readily identifiable with the application of each theory in the three national cultures. With participative leadership for example, issues of time intensity, information sensitivity, and size of the labor force are unavoidable. Two issues that are associated with transformational leadership across the three national cultures include measurement difficulties and anti-democracy; while issues identifiable with transactional leadership across the three national cultures include the need to maintain status quo and the use of rewards and punishment to achieve results.

Yukl (2013) defined leadership as "the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives" (p. 7). The GLOBE studies also defined organizational leadership as "the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute towards the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members" (House et al., 2004. p.15). These two definitions demonstrate that organizational leadership is a collective effort involving the ability to influence others into achieving common goals.

Increased economic integration, technological advancement, and cross-border expansion of multinationals has put additional burden on organizational leadership to include cultural influences amongst their consideration. Indeed, House et al. (1999) explain that "since effective organizational leadership is critical to the success of international operations, this globalization of industrial organizations presents numerous organizational and leadership challenges" (p. 176).

2.   LEADERSHIP THEORIES

Bernal (2009) explain that "Leadership has been a topic of interest since the existence of human kind, but the scientific study of leadership only started in the 1930s" (p. 2). House and Aditya (2007) share this position. According to them, "the systematic social scientific study of leadership did not begin until the early 1930" (p. 409). Starting with the traits theory of leadership, a significant number of leadership theories that cuts across national boundaries and cultures have since emerged.Since the advent of the traits theory in the 1930s, a significantly large number of other studies have resulted in the development of other leadership theories. This paper will focus on three of such leadership theories i.e. participative, transformational, and transactional leadership theories and their application to the national cultures of the United Kingdom, Nigeria, and France.

2.1.   Participative Theory of Leadership

According to Yukl (2013),participative leadership "involves a leader's use of decision procedures that allow other people such as subordinates to have some influence over decisions that will affect them" (p.51). Filosa (2012) list other terms used to describe participative leadership to include "consultation, joint decision making, power sharing, decentralization, and democratic management" (p.15). Yukl (2013) also include "empowering leadership and democratic leadership" (p.51). Kouzes and Posner (2007) identify several assumptions upon which the participative leadership theory is based on, these assumptions include:

  i.   Improvement in understanding of issues by those implementing the decisions;
  ii.   Greater commitment to actions as everyone is involved in relevant decision-making;
  iii.   Reduction in competitive and increase in collaborative amongst the group;
  iv.   Two or more decision makers are better than a sole decision maker.

Huang et al. (2010) find "that managerial and non-managerial subordinates do not differ considerably in how they interpret participative leadership. Participative leadership tends to generate feelings of empowerment as well as trust-in-supervisor for both managerial and non-managerial subordinates" (p.136). Huang et al. (2010)also find "a strong and direct link between participative leadership behavior and the task performance of managerial subordinates" (p.136).

The application of participative leadership theory in the three national cultures results in a number of issues some of which include time intensity, information sensitivity, and size of the labor force.

2.1.1.   Time-intensive

Due to a very strong labor union in France, decision making often requires the participation of all cadres of the workforce, this invariably means that procedures have to be adhered to, decision making slowed and performance impaired. Bryson, Forth, and Laroche (2009) found that:

> In France, performance is slightly worse where unions have bargaining rights but it is poorest of all where those bargaining rights are exercised. In addition, workplaces with high union density are less likely than other workplaces to be high performers. Comparing different unions, performance is lowest in France where the revolutionary SUD is present (p.7).

In Nigeria, the predominant issue is tribalism. There is a strong allegiance to tribe; as a result, it is not uncommon to find the leadership of an organization dominated by members of the same tribe. In such situations, there are teamwork and loyalties amongst management but little participation by other cadres of the workforce as most decisions are taken autocratically by the top echelon of organizations. According to Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges, Dastmalchian, and House (2012) "[Sub-Saharan Africa] is an interesting geographical region for the study of leadership practices due to the co-existence of contrasting cultural characteristics including collective and individualistic tendencies, hierarchical and egalitarian institutions, and modern and tribal societies" (p.6).Although the orientation in the United Kingdom is that of performance and decisiveness, leaders often consult with workers at different levels while retaining ultimate responsibility for decision makingwithin a defined timeframe. Bryson et al. (2009) find that "In the British case, although having any union members was clearly associated with lower financial performance than having none, there was only tentative evidence that high union density was associated with lower performance than lower density" (p. 16).

2.1.2.   Information Sharing

Due to the requirements of the United Kingdom Data Protection Act 1998, Leaders areoften very reluctant to provide information to employees particularly if such information is regarded as business-sensitive or has the potential to cause conflict among employees. In practice, participative-style leaders share minimal information with other workers while keeping hold of vital or strategic details. Similar to the United Kingdom, Leaders within French organizations restricts information they share with their employees citing the requirements of the European Union Data Protection Directive. However, as a result of the terms of regular collective bargaining agreements, participative leadership is more successful in France compared to the United Kingdom. According to Bryson et al. (2009) "Organization-level or workplace-level bargaining often take place alongside sectoral or national bargaining which is very widespread. As a consequence, the vast majority of French workers have their pay set via collective bargaining, whether or not they are union members" (p.1).

As a result of the tribal and family loyalties within many Nigerian organizations, vital business information is freely shared within the leadership and management levels of organizations but this information rarely distils to lower levels of management and other cadres of the workforce. Dorfman et al. (2012) find that "Group solidarity, is also a traditional value in[Sub-Saharan African] cultures that reflects loyalty to one's family, clan

or tribe as well as teamwork and service to one's in-group and others. Leadership styles that are Team Oriented and Humane reflect this cultural dimension, and GLOBE respondents indicated both of these leadership attributes"(p.6).

2.1.3.   Size and Skill of Labor Force
Democratic leadership style is difficult to operate in organizations with very large labor force because of the challenge of reaching a consensus among competing opinions, this is even more difficult to adopt where a significant proportion of the labor force is unskilledand not prepared to be reasonable.This holds true in all three cultures. Stutzer and Frey (2005) posit that "International organizations have, moreover, been accused of large-scale inefficiency and waste, and of being ineffective in the sense of not being able to put policies into action or enforce them. Still others complain about the "democratic deficit" of international organizations" (p.306).

2.2.   Transformational Theory of Leadership
Burns (1978) defined a transformational leader as one who "looks for the potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower" (p. 4). Burns (1978) added that transformational leadership was a process by which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (p.20). Yukl (1999) explained that "followers feel trust admiration, loyalty, and respect towards the leader, and they are motivated to do more than they originally expected to do" (p.286).

According to Yukl (2013), other terms for transformational leadership "include visionary leadership and inspirational leadership…some of the same behaviors are also described in theories of charismatic leadership" (p.53). Spreitzer, G et al. (2005) concur with this description and explained that "transformational leaders define the need for change, develop a vision for the future, and mobilize follower commitment to achieve results beyond what would normally be expected" (p.3.). Avolio, Waldman, and Yammarino (1991) identify four separate components of transformational leadership to include idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

The application of transformational leadership theory in the three national cultures results in a number of issues two of which include measurement difficulty and anti-democracy.

2.2.1.   Measurement Difficulty
Transformational leadership across the three different cultures is predicated on 'great man' traits which are largely a function of emotions and values. Yukl (1999) describe the leaders control over followers "in terms of the short-term effects of a leader's behavior on mediating variables relevant to task performance, such as arousal of motives or emotions, increased self-efficacy or optimism" (p. 287). Part of the difficulty in measuring transformational leadership in any of these cultures is explainable in part by the style adopted by the leader who may choose to be domineering, participative, democratic or authoritarian. In Nigeria, transformational leaders such as Herbert Macaulay for example, are revered for being nationalists, and for political struggles, imprisonment and dying for the struggle to secure independence from British colonial rule. The same applies to France and the United Kingdom. According to Greenwald (2007);

This belittling of leadership represents, in part, a reaction to overemphasis onleadership in the past. Historians and the public have often attributed humankind'sgreat achievements to great individuals. Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte of France (1769–1821), vividly depicted astride a rearing horse, personifies the "great man" ofhistory. His genius alone, some have maintained, enabled Europe to throw off the last vestiges of the Middle Ages and enter the modern era... In the opinionof many, these and similar giants have magically transformed the world by virtue ofpersonal gifts (p.224).

2.2.2.   Anti-democratic
Transformational leaders in the three cultures are likened to superstars. Notwithstanding genuine concerns that followers may have, more often than not, such concerns are swept under the carpet as followers avoid challenging a leader as their destinies may be tied to the ambitions of the leader. It is not uncommon to hear words such as elites or heroes used to describe transformational leaders in the three cultures and. Indeed, Yukl (1999) explain that "transformational leadership theories reflect the implicit assumptions associated with the 'heroic leadership' stereotype" (p.292).

2.3.   Transactional Theory of Leadership
Burns (1978) explain that transactional "leadership occurs when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things" (p.19); in corroborating this explanation,

Yukl (2013) adds that "transactional leadership motivates followers by appealing to their self-interest and exchanging benefits" (p.321). There are two dimensions to transactional leadership i.e.

  i.   Contingent reward and contingent punishment to encourage desired employee behavior and good performance;
  ii. Active and passive management-by-exception which implies that leaders get involved when employees fail to meet expected performance standards. According to Lievens, Van Geit and Coetsier (1997), "In passive management-by-exception (PM) leaders intervene only after standards are not met. In the more active form of management-by-exception (AM) leaders try to anticipate mistakes or problems" (p.417).

The application of transactional leadership theory in the three national cultures results in a number of issues two of which include working within existing organizational culture and achieving results through rewards and punishments.

2.3.1.   Work within existing organizational culture

In terms of the labor force, the Nigeria economy is dominated by government and the bureaucracy associated with it government establishments. Given the relatively short-term nature of their appointments, political leaders are often reluctant to introduce dramatic changes but are rather content with maintaining status quo. In the United Kingdom and France, the transactional leadership style is not pronounced at the very top level of organizational leadership; the exception to this rule is when there is an unexpected change in government fiscal or monetary policy such as corporate tax or interest rate changes which organizations often have to immediately respond to in their decision making.

2.3.2.   Leaders achieve results through rewards and punishments

Although a reactive style of leadership as opposed to proactivity, it is generally agreed that transactional leadership is very effective during periods of crisis or emergencies with academic literature replete with notable examples. In the northern part of Nigeria, a religious insurgency has meant that government have had to use ruthless tactics in managing the insurgency, this includes punishments for those in support of the insurgency and rewards for information leading to the apprehension of the insurgents. This leadership style however has limited success in France and the United Kingdom, primarily due to very strong labor and human rights laws, and collective bargaining agreements with labor unions. For example, the United Kingdom Employment Relations Act 1999 introduced statutory recognition for trade unions and granted them with rights to negotiate in organizations where majority of workers were in support of trade unionism. According to France employment law, as long as an organization has at least 50 employees, any of the five national trade union unions is permitted to appoint an employees' representative with whom the employer is required to engage in annual negotiates over specific terms and conditions including salaries and pensions. Bryson et al. (2009)explains that "Any collective agreement that results from these negotiations automatically applies to all employees in the firm, even if very few employees belong to or support the union in question." (p.2).

3.0.   CONCLUSION

The paper began by providing alternative definitions of organizational leadership. A re-occurring theme within the definitions was that of a process which involves influencing people to achieve organizational objectives or success. Using United Kingdom, France and Nigeria, the paper then describes three leadership theories and explains how each of the three theories currently applies to the threenational cultures. The review demonstrates several features.

  i.   Application of the three leadership theories emphasized performance orientation as animportant requirement. Dorfman et al. (2012) "found that performance orientation is an important cultural driver of all global leadership expectations." (p.3).
  ii. While cultures may influence leadership styles, it is not a determinant of leadership behavior. Evidence from the GLOBE project research as reported by Dorfman et al (2012) also find that;
       National culture does NOT predict leadership behavior Contrary to the conventional wisdom, our analysis of the correlation between the 9 cultural values and 6 global leadership dimensions of CEO behavior shows that with a few exceptions, national culture values do not directly predict CEO leadership behavior. Instead, we demonstrate that national culture values are antecedent factors which influence leadership expectations. (p.7).
  iii. Irrespective of national cultures or leadership theory, organization leadership involves the ability to influence a group of people into achieving stated or desired organizational objectives.

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