

OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF LEADERSHIP PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

The theories of 'new Leadership' paradigm do not explain the complete operational leadership process. However, their integration provides a better scenario but still leaving some gaps unfilled. A framework for operational leadership process based on *supporting* and *core* dimensions has been proposed which is expected to not only integrate all the approaches but also explain the leadership process comprehensively. Implications of the proposed framework have also been discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a phenomenon of the distant past (Bass, 1990). However, the systematic social scientific study commenced in 1930s (House and Aditya, 1997). Since then, a number of theories have been evolved. One line of research on leadership is derived from trait theories of leadership that focuses on the personal attributes of the leaders such as high energy, stress tolerance, self-confidence, socialized power motivation, emotional maturity, and personal integrity. Other perspective examines leader behaviors such as goal attainment, group satisfaction with the leader (Irving and Klene, 2004). Manfred *et al.*, (2004) while pointing out third perspective of the leadership study, comment that 'Situationists' deny the influence of individual differences and attribute all variations in leadership effectiveness to environmental constraints. These three approaches to leadership i.e., trait, behavioural, situational remained as the focal areas of interest in the leadership study until 1970's.

Last three decades observed a major paradigm shift; (Bryman, 1992) calls it 'the New Leadership', whereas (House and Aditya, 1997) term it as 'neo-charismatic' leadership paradigm. This paradigm shift is significant because of its three distinctive features. First, it consists of the theories that are of a common genus (House and Aditya, 1997). Though terminology used by their authors differ, but more similarities than differences exist (Hartog *et al.*, 1997). Second, it seems more concerned with exploring *operational dimension*: interactive and dynamic constructs or variables

that emphasize attitudes and behaviours necessary for achievement of exceptional performance and leadership effectiveness e.g., individualized consideration, idealized influence, inspirational motivation (Bass and Avolio, 1999); challenging the process, encouraging the heart (Kouzes and Posner, 1987; 1988). Third, it integrates ideas from trait, style and contingency approaches of leadership (Hartog *et al.*, 1997) providing a more comprehensive view as compared to these approaches offer separately.

Although this leadership wave integrates different perspectives of leadership but ignores the criticality of complete leadership process. Leadership needs to be researched as a process, rather than through the study of leaders alone (Yukl, 1994). These 'neo-charismatic' approaches concentrate emphasize on visioning and influencing aspects of leadership and provide a fractional view of other necessary dimensions required to complete the leadership process. However, their integration provides much better view of the leadership process but still leaves many gaps unfilled. To provide an integrated view and fill these gaps, we need an operational framework of leadership process; a framework that lists comprehensive broader operational dimensions of the leadership process. In this paper, we shall develop an operational framework of leadership process based on *core* and *supporting* dimensions.

THE NEW LEADERSHIP' PARADIGM (NLP)