Styles of Leadership in Institutions

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Abstract : *Studies of leadership styles are diverse and varied. Multiple definitions haven been given by various writers of various disciplines. Leadership style may be broadly defined as the approach and way of providing, direction, motivating followers and people, and implementing plans and programmes. But the most that can be said of this polymorphic and universal phenomenon, whose sources of influence bases of power include coercive, reward, legitimate, expert and referent powers; is that it has three basic styles of leadership. These styles which are also applicable to public administration comprise autocratic, democratic and laissez faire. They form the subject – matter of article.*
Keywords: *sources of leaders influence, comparative leadership studies, basic styles of administrative leadership, and practical applications to leadership situations.*

I.   Introduction

In order to understand in correct contexts and proper perspectives the basic styles of leadership, it is necessary, initially, to briefly outline five sources of leaders influence or power bases of leadership as follows:

1.1   Leading writers and scholars
The leading writers and scholars relevant to this aspect include: John French; Bertram Raven and Bernard Bass.

1.2   Power bases of leadership
John P. R. French and Bertram Raven [1959] have proposed five sources of leader's influence or power bases of leadership. These bases of power, which are in effect methods that and managers utilize to influence their followers and employees, are:

a. **Coercive power**; it is based on fear. It is the capacity of the leader to punish his followers for not performing the assigned tasks, for example, suspensions, salary reduction, demotion and so on.
b. **Reward power**; it is the opposite of coercive power. It is the ability of the leader to positively recognize his followers and provide them appropriate rewards. These rewards could be monetary or non monetary.
c. **Legitimate power**; it comes from the position of the leader in the organisations hierarchy. The followers feel the obligation of accepting the leader's authority. For example, a manager has more legitimate power than a supervisor. This is so because a manager has formal control over resources.
d. **Expert power**; it is derived from the knowledge, special skill, specific expertise or critical information possessed by the leader. The possession of these attributes enables the leader to gain respect and compliance of the followers.
e. **Referent power**; it is based on the personal attraction that a leader holds for his followers. The followers identify with the leader and see him as their role model.

1.3   Recategorization of sources of power
However, Bernard Bass has grouped the coercive power, reward power and legitimate power under the category of position power and that of expert power and referent power under the category of personal power. The position power is deduced from the organizational structure while the personal power is derived from the individual qualities of the leader, regardless of his position in the organizational structure of the institution.

1.4   Application of leadership styles to public administration
We now apply all this to the analysis of the three basic styles of administrative leadership.

II.   Purpose of this article
The purpose of this article is to analyse the three basic styles of administrative leadership as supported by available relevant literature resources.

III.   Styles of leadership
The behaviour exhibited by a leader during supervision of subordinates is known as leadership style. Actually, three different leadership styles identified by Kurt Lewin, a renowned social scientist, in 1939, were: authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire. His results showed that the democratic style of leadership is superior to the other two styles. Attributes of each style are examined as follows:

3.1 Autocratic style
a. The authoritarian makes all decisions, independent of member's input. The authority figure dictates direction, leaving members in the dark about future plans. The authority figure selects which members will work collaboratively and determines solely the work tasks for the teams. This leader type is very personal in his praise and criticisms of each member, but does not actively participate with the group, unless demonstrating to the group. The authority figure is friendly and/or impersonal, but not openly hostile.

**b. Figure 1: Autocratic style of leadership**

L= leader
S=subordinates
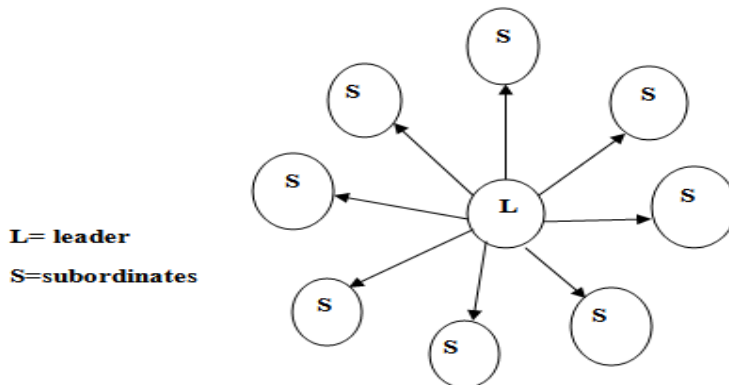
b. In this style, the entire power is concentrated in the hands of the leader. He decides all policies. He gives orders to subordinates and demands complete obedience from them. He withholds rewards or gives punishment. Figure 1above explains this style of leadership.

3.2 Democratic style
a. Also known as participative style of leadership, in this style, the leader allows the subordinate to participate in the decision – making process. All policies and decisions are arrived at through such group discussions. The communication flows freely and is multi – directional. This style became popular during the era of human relations (neo-classical) approach to administration. Figure 2 explains this styles of leadership.

**b. Figure 2: Democratic style of leadership**

L = leader

S = subordinates
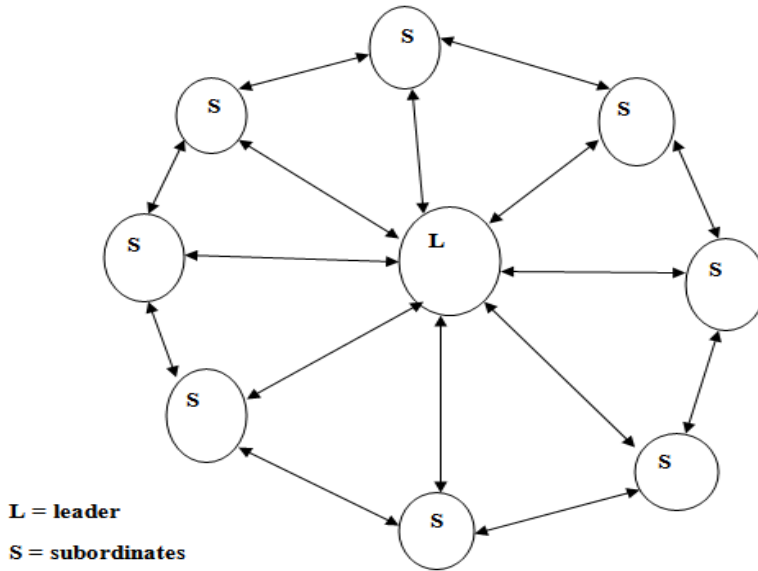
b. The democratic leader welcomes teamwork input and facilitates group discussions and decision making. This leader type shares plans with the group and offers multiple options for group consideration and adoption. Encourages members to work freely with each other and leaves division of tasks to the group. This leader is objective in praise and criticism, and joins group activities without over – participating.

3.3 Laissez faire style
a. It is also known as free rein style of leadership. In this style, the leader gives complete independence to the subordinates in their operations. He allows them to set their own goals and to achieve them. In other words, this style involves complete freedom for group or individual decision with no or minimum participation of the leader. His only job is to supply various materials and information asked by the subordinates. Figure 3 explains this style of leadership.

b. **Figure 3: Laissez faire style of leadership**
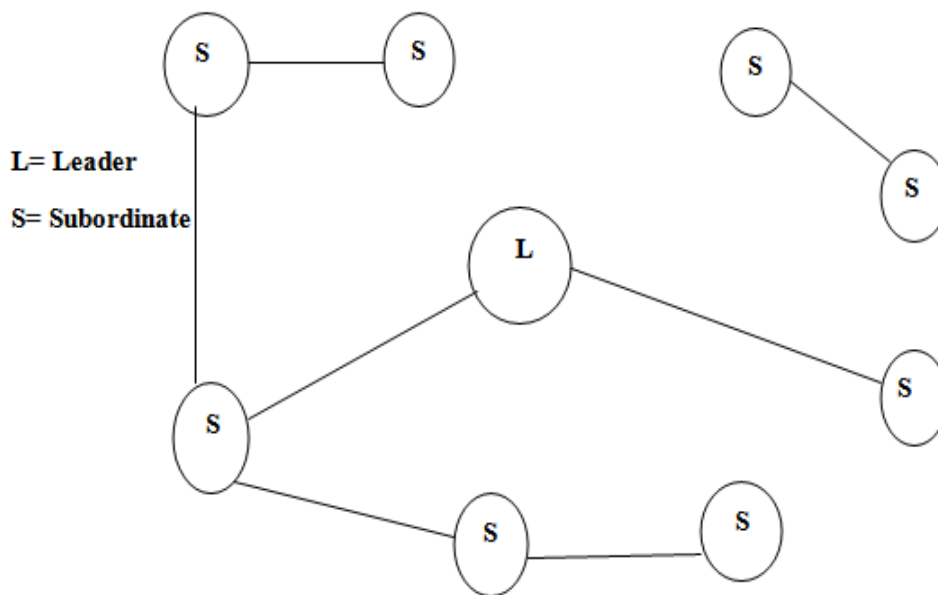
b. The laissez- faire leader allows the group complete freedom for decision – making, without him participating. This leader type provides materials and offers to assist only by request. The laissez-faire leader does not participate in work discussions or group tasks. He does not offer commentary on members' performance unless asked directly, and does not participate or intervene in group/individual activities.

IV. Critical analysis of the three leadership styles
4.1 General comments
Since 1939, Kurt Lewin's research has been the basis for many further research studies and articles on organizational behaviour in theory and in practical action. Each leadership style can be appropriate depending on the environment within which it is implemented, the members of the group (employees), and the goals or tasks that are being undertaken by the group. Leaders may adjust their style of leadership to fit certain tasks, groups or settings.

4.2 Specific critical comments on the three leadership styles identified
a. An authoritarian leadership style can be effective when a situation calls for expedited action or decision making. Group members who are not self motivated, who prefer structures, and who appreciate significant direction and monitoring may thrive under this style.
b. A democratic leadership style permits multiple viewpoints, inputs, and dynamic participation, while still maintaining control and the leadership role. A quality democratic leader recognizes each member's strengths and effectively and effectively elicits the best performance from each member; all the while guiding and leading effectively. A challenge for the democratic leader is to recognize that not all tasks need to be handled by the group, that the leader should appropriately address some issues alone and on his own accord. This is the most preferable type of leadership.
c. A laissez-faire leadership style works best when group members are highly skilled and motivated, with a proven track record of performance excellence. This hands-off approach can allow these capable members to be productive and effective. The laissez-faire style is interpreted by the members as a sign of confidence and trust in their abilities and further empowers members of the group to be successful, self praising and motivated.

V.   Summary and conclusion

5.1 Summary

From comparative leadership studies, and specifically, in opposing the traits approach, leading social researchers argue that the most urgent need in developing Asian, African and Latin American countries is the need to quickly move away from the traditional leadership and that the young leaders must be trained to develop into true democratic agents and instruments of meaningful social change. Thus, is order to have competent, reliable and successful public administration in the third world countries already mentioned, leadership must operate simultaneously at two significant levels, namely, political and administrative, but, more analytically at four different levels, that is, political, executive, administrative and technical/operational [E. N. Gladden: Essentials of public administration:1972: 67 – 70] in the public sector institutions.

5.2 Conclusion

The modern trend to administrative leadership is towards shared democratic leadership as opposed to autocratic or laissez faire leadership.

Thus, an eclectic methodist to administrative leadership has this to say: Man the myriads of situations in which he finds himself, the continuous diversity of aims, objectives and functions that he pursues and that are laid down for him and the multitudinous types of frames of reference in which he may find himself, are all together so complex and complicated that we cannot evolve anything like a universal formal and set of qualities for administrative leadership. The success of any administrative leadership is determined by the understanding, explanations, imagination, innovation, creativity, resourcefulness and knowledge of the leader who must preferably be democratic to his subordinates or followers. This knowledge includes knowledge of things inside and outside the group's own frames of reference

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