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Leadership climates in Malaysian school: situational and contingency theories

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ABSTRACT

There is lack of shared vision among the employee and employed. By referring to the Ministry of Education of Malaysia, there is mismatch between keeping the quality management techniques and education process. Current realities on education in Malaysian education is those who control (Education Ministry), there is a crisis of confidence in the ability for institution as school, college and University.

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Introduction

In the late 1970s/early 1980s, the authors both developed their own models using the situational leadership theory; Hersey - Situational Leadership Model and Blanchard et al. Situational Leadership II Model. The fundamental underpinning of the situational leadership theory is that there is no single "best" style of leadership. Effective leadership is task-relevant, and the most successful leaders are those that adapt their leadership style to the maturity ("the capacity to set high but attainable goals, willingness and ability to take responsibility for the task, and relevant education and/or experience of an individual or a group for the task") of the individual or group they are attempting to lead or influence. Effective leadership varies, not only with the person or group that is being influenced, but it also depends on the task, job or function that needs to be accomplished. The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Model rests on two fundamental concepts; leadership style and the individual or group's maturity level.

Leadership styles

Hersey and Blanchard characterized leadership style in terms of the amount of Task Behaviour and Relationship Behavior that the leader provides to their followers. They categorized all leadership styles into four behaviour types, which they named S1 to S4:

S1: Telling	Characterized by one-way communication in which the leader defines the roles of the individual or group and provides the what, how, why, when and where to do the task
S2: Selling	While the leader is still providing the direction, he or she is now using two-way communication and providing the socio-emotional support that will allow the individual or group being influenced to buy into the process
S3: Participating	This is how shared decision-making about aspects of how the task is accomplished and the leader is providing less task behaviours while maintaining high relationship behaviour
S4: Delegating	The leader is still involved in decisions; however, the process and responsibility has been passed to the individual or group. The leader stays involved to monitor progress.

Of these, no one style is considered optimal for all leaders to use all the time. Effective leaders need to be flexible, and must adapt themselves according to the situation.

Maturity Level

The right leadership style will depend on the person or group being led. The Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory identified four levels of Maturity M1 through M4:

M1	M2	M3	M4
They are unable to take on responsibility for the task being done; however, they are willing to work at the task. They are novice but enthusiastic	They still lack the specific skills required for the job in hand and are unable and unwilling to do or to take responsibility for this job or task. (According to Ken Blanchard "The honeymoon is over")	They are experienced and able to do the task but lack the confidence or the willingness to take on responsibility.	They are experienced at the task, and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. They are able and willing to not only do the task, but to take responsibility for the task.

Vroom-Yetton Decision Model

This model identifies five different styles. They are:

Vroom & Yetton formulated following seven questions on decision quality, commitment, problem information and decision acceptance, with which leaders can determine level of followers' involvement in decision:

- Is there a quality requirement? Is the nature of the solution critical? Are there technical or rational grounds for selecting among possible solutions?
- Do I have sufficient information to make a high quality decision?
- Is the problem structured? Are the alternative courses of action and methods for their evaluation known?
- Is acceptance of the decision by subordinates critical to its implementation?

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- v. If I were to make the decision by myself, is it reasonably certain that it would be accepted by my subordinates?
- vi. Do subordinates share the organizational goals to be obtained in solving this problem?
- vii. Is conflict among subordinates likely in obtaining the preferred solution?

Autocratic Type 1 (AI)	Autocratic Type 2 (AII)	Consultative Type 1 (CI)	Consultative Type 2 (CII)	Group-based Type 2 (GII)
Leader makes own decision using information that is readily available to you at the time. This type is completely autocratic	Leader collects required information from followers, then makes decision alone. Problem or decision may or may not be informed to followers. Here, followers involvement is just providing information	Leader shares problem to relevant followers individually and seeks their ideas & suggestions and makes decision alone. Here followers' do not meet each other & leader's decision may or may not have followers influence. So, here followers involvement is at the level of providing alternatives individually	Leader shares problem to relevant followers as a group and seeks their ideas & suggestions and makes decision alone. Here followers' meet each other and through discussions they understand other alternatives. But leader's decision may or may not have followers influence. So, here followers involvement is at the level of helping as a group in decision-making.	Leader discusses problem & situation with followers as a group and seeks their ideas & suggestions through brainstorming. Leader accepts any decision & do not try to force his idea. Decision accepted by the group is the final one

Contingency Theories

Fiedler Contingency Model

The Fiedler contingency model is a leadership theory of industrial and organizational psychology developed by Fred Fiedler (born 1922), one of the leading scientists who helped his field move from the research of traits and personal characteristics of leaders to leadership styles and behaviours.

Two factors

The first management style, Taylorists, assumed there was one best style of leadership. Fiedler's contingency model postulates that the leader's effectiveness is based on 'situational contingency' which is a result of interaction of two factors: leadership style and situational favourableness (later called situational control). More than 400 studies have since investigated this relationship.

Least preferred co-worker (LPC)

The leadership style of the leader, thus, fixed and measured by what he calls the least preferred co-worker (LPC) scale, an instrument for measuring an individual's leadership orientation. The LPC scale asks a leader to think of all the people with whom they have ever worked and then describe the person, with whom they have worked least well, using a series of bipolar scales of 1 to 8, such as the following:

The responses to these scales (usually 18-25 in total) are summed and averaged: a high LPC score suggests that the leader has a human relations orientation, while a low LPC score indicates a task orientation. Fiedler assumes that everybody's least preferred co-worker in fact is on average about equally

unpleasant. But people who are indeed relationship motivated, tend to describe their least preferred co-workers in a more positive manner, e.g., more pleasant and more efficient. Therefore, they receive higher LPC scores. People who are task motivated, on the other hand, tend to rate their least preferred co-workers in a more negative manner. Therefore, they receive lower LPC scores.

Unfriendly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Friendly
 Uncooperative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Cooperative
 Hostile 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Supportive
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 Guarded 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Open

So, the Least Preferred Co-worker (LPC) scale is actually not about the least preferred worker at all, instead, it is about the person who takes the test; it is about that person's motivation type. This is so, because, individuals who rate their least preferred co-worker in relatively favourable light on these scales derive satisfaction out of interpersonal relationship, and those who rate the co-worker in a relatively unfavourable light get satisfaction out of successful task performance. This method reveals an individual's emotional reaction to people they cannot work with. Critics point out that this is not always an accurate measurement of leadership effectiveness.

Situational favourableness

According to Fiedler, there is no ideal leader. Both low-LPC (task-oriented) and high-LPC (relationship-oriented) leaders can be effective if their leadership orientation fits the situation. The contingency theory allows for predicting the characteristics of the appropriate situations for effectiveness. Three situational components determine the favourableness of situational control:

1. Leader-Member Relations, referring to the degree of mutual trust, respect and confidence between the leader and the subordinates.
2. Task Structure, referring to the extent to which group tasks are clear and structured.
3. Leader Position Power, referring to the power inherent in the leaders positions itself.

Path Goal Theory

The path-goal theory, also known as the path-goal theory of leader effectiveness or the path-goal model, is a leadership theory developed by Robert House, an Ohio State University graduate, in 1971 and revised in 1996. The theory states that a leader's behaviour is contingent to the satisfaction, motivation and performance of her or his subordinates. The revised version also argues that the leader engages in behaviours that complement subordinate's abilities and compensate for deficiencies. The path-goal model can be classified both as a contingency or as a transactional leadership theory.

According to the original theory, the manager's job is viewed as guiding workers to choose the best paths to reach their goals, as well as the organizational goals. The theory argues that leaders will have to engage in different types of leadership behaviour depending on the nature and the demands of a particular situation. It is the leader's job to assist followers in attaining goals and to provide the direction and support needed to ensure that their goals are compatible with the organization's goals.

A leader's behaviour is acceptable to subordinates when viewed as a source of satisfaction and motivational when need satisfaction is contingent on performance, and the leader facilitates, coaches, and rewards effective performance. The

original path-goal theory identifies *achievement-oriented*, *directive*, *participative*, and *supportive* leader behaviours:

- The *directive path-goal clarifying leader behaviour* refers to situations where the leader lets followers know what is expected of them and tells them how to perform their tasks. The theory argues that this behaviour has the most positive effect when the subordinates' role and task demands are ambiguous and intrinsically satisfying.
- The *achievement-oriented leader behaviour* refers to situations where the leader sets challenging goals for followers, expects them to perform at their highest level, and shows confidence in their ability to meet this expectation. Occupations in which the achievement motive was most predominant were technical jobs, sales persons, scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs.
- The *participative leader behaviour* involves leaders consulting with followers and asking for their suggestions before making a decision. This behaviour is predominant when subordinates are highly personally involved in their work.
- The *supportive leader behaviour* is directed towards the satisfaction of subordinates needs and preferences. The leader shows concern for the followers' psychological well being. This behaviour is especially needed in situations in which tasks or relationships are psychologically or physically distressing.

Path-goal theory assumes that leaders are flexible and that they can change their style, as situations require. The theory proposes two contingency variables, such as environment and follower characteristics, that moderate the leader behaviour-outcome relationship. Environment is outside the control of the follower-task structure, authority system, and work group. *Environmental factors* determine the type of leader behaviour required if the follower outcomes are to be maximized. *Follower characteristics* are the locus of control, experience, and perceived ability. Personal characteristics of subordinates determine how the environment and leader are interpreted. Effective leaders clarify the path to help their followers achieve goals and make the journey easier by reducing roadblocks and pitfalls. Research demonstrates that employee performance and satisfaction are positively influenced when the leader

compensates for the shortcomings in either the employee or the work setting. In contrast to the Fiedler contingency model, the path-goal model states that the four leadership styles are fluid, and that leaders can adopt any of the four depending on what the

Leadership Climates in Malaysian School

In Malaysia, the climate at school, college and university is totally different, the headmaster and teacher playing a role in order to ensure the system effective. Stress is a key determinant of leader effectiveness and a distinction is made between stress related to the leader's superior, and stress related to subordinates or the situation itself. In stressful situations, leaders dwell on the stressful relations with others and cannot focus their intellectual abilities on the job. Thus, intelligence is more effective and used more often in stress-free situations. As with other situational factors, for stressful situations recommends altering or engineering the leadership situation to capitalize on the leader's strengths. Despite all the criticism, an important theory should be established for a brand new perspective for the study of leadership.

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