Application of the Situational Leadership Model to Achieve Effective Performance in Mining Organizations Teams

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Abstract

The situational leadership theory is becoming increasingly popular in modern organizational leadership especially in the mining sector. The most important task in situational leadership is being able to motivate the subordinates. A leader's adaptableness is the important requirement for the success of the situational leadership model. The appropriateness of a leadership style changes with change in the leadership environment. The model highlights on using more than one style of leadership especially when developing subordinates. According to this model, there is a no best leadership style since the key factors of leadership is the adaptation to the job maturity and the proficiency level of the subordinates.

Keywords: Leadership, mining organisations, situational leadership, team performance

1. Introduction

The situational theory of leadership is becoming popular in the framework of modern organizational leadership. A leadership style refers to the design of behaviour; including both action and words as validated by a leader or as observed by subordinates. Situational leadership revolves around job-related maturity. According to Mark et al (2009) job maturity refers to an individual's ability in performing a job and this is a key factor determining a leader's behaviour. The situational leadership model indicates that effective leadership is dependent on both the acts of management and leadership (Silverthorne, 2000). The model arose from the understanding that not all individuals within a team compare in terms of maturity level and that the need for a leadership style varies with situations. Thus the model is based on situational variables as it depends on day-to-day perceptions of a leader as well as the environmental observations. Efficiency of this model includes a leader's valuation of the growth level of their subordinates as well as the situation at hand to adjust their leadership method accordingly (Essays UK, 2018). Situational leadership needs first understanding one's principal leadership approach and the level of the follower's development process. Situational leadership is principally becoming an effective strategy among mining organisations leaders and thus very vital in the challenging and complex mining environment.

The situational theory of leadership proposes that no sole leadership style is finest. Instead, it all depends on the situation at hand and which type of leadership and strategies are best-suited to the task (Arvidsson et al., 2007). According to this theory, the most effective leaders are those that are able to adapt their style to the circumstances, task and nature of the team. The situational leadership theory is often referred to as the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory.

2. Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory and Maturity Levels

The Situational Leadership Model is a timeless, repeatable structure for leaders to match their behaviours with the performance needs of the individual or team that they are trying to influence. Situational leadership is based on the connection between leaders and subordinates and serves as a context to analyse each situation based on the performance willingness and the level that a follower displays in performing an exact task (Maxwell, 2009).

Originated on the leader's judgement, the necessary amounts of relationship behaviour and task behaviour are applied and transferred to the follower in order to support their needs and advance growth. The situational leadership model is given in Figure 1.
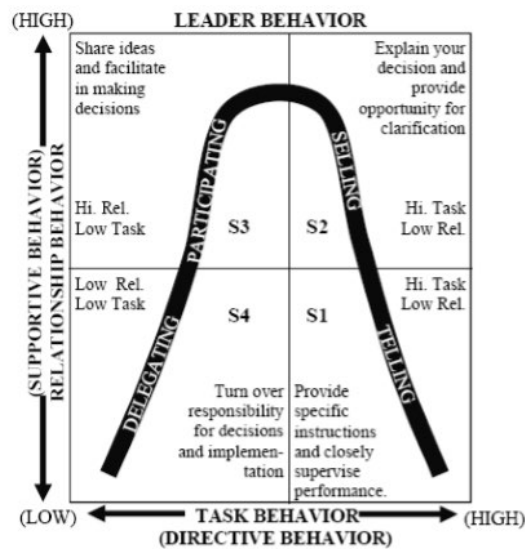

Figure 1: Situational Leadership Model (Arvidsson et al., 2007)

Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory suggested that there are four primary leadership styles which are:

- Telling (S1): In this leadership style the leader tells people what to do and how to do it.
- Selling (S2): Leaders sell their designs and message to get team members to buy into the process.
- Participating (S3): In this approach, the leader offers less direction and allows members of the team to take a more energetic role in coming up with ideas and making decisions.
- Delegating (S4): This style is characterized by a less involved, detached approach to leadership. Team members tend to make most of the decisions and take most of the accountability for what happens.

The right style of leadership depends significantly on the maturity level i.e. the level of knowledge and capability of the individuals or team.

Hersey and Blanchard's theory identified four different levels of maturity and these are:

- **M1:** Team members lack the knowledge, skills and readiness to complete the task.
- **M2:** Team members are willing and eager but lack the capability.
- **M3:** Team members have the skills and competence to complete the task but are reluctant to take accountability.
- **M4:** Team members are highly accomplished and willing to complete the task.

The behavior of some leaders is characterized mainly by organizing accomplishments for their subordinates in terms of task accomplishment while other leaders focus on providing socio-emotional support in terms of personal relations between themselves and their subordinates (Wassim and Imran, 2010). Other leaders have styles categorized by both high-task and high relationship behavior. Some leaders also tend to provide little task or link for their subordinates. These types of leader behavior are shown in Figure 2 in accordance to the situational leadership model.
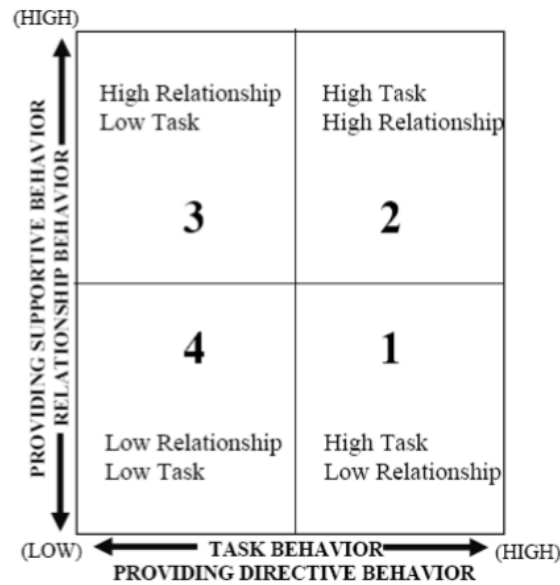
Figure 2. Four basic leader behavior styles used in situational leadership (Maxwell, 2009)

3. Matching Leadership Styles with Maturity Levels

The Hersey-Blanchard model suggests that the following leadership styles are the most appropriate for these maturity levels and these can be applied in the mining sector:

- Low Maturity (M1)—Telling (S1)
- Medium Maturity (M2)—Selling (S2)
- Medium Maturity (M3)—Participating (S3)
- High Maturity (M4)—Delegating (S4)

A *telling* (S1) style is essential at the beginning of a mining project when subordinates lack the responsibility or information to work on their own. As subordinates become more knowledgeable and knowledgeable, however, the leader may want to shift into a more *delegating* approach (S4). This situational model of leadership emphases on flexibility so that leaders are able to adapt according to the needs of their subordinates and the demands of the situation. The situational approach to leadership also circumvents the pitfalls of the single-style approach by identifying that there are many different ways of dealing with a difficulty and that leaders need to be able to assess a situation and the maturity levels of subordinates in order to determine what method will be the most effective at any given instant. Situational theories give greater thought to the complication of dynamic social situations and the many individuals acting in different roles who will ultimately add to the outcome.

4. The Situational Leadership Model II

The Situational Leadership II (or SLII model) was developed by Kenneth Blanchard and builds on Blanchard and Hersey's original theory. According to the revised version of the theory, operational leaders must base their behavior on the developing level of team members for specific tasks. The developing level is determined by each individual's level of competence and commitment. These levels include:

- Enthusiastic beginner (D1): High commitment, low competence.
- Disillusioned learner (D2): Some competence, but setbacks have led to low commitment.
- Capable but cautious performer (D3): Competence is growing, but the level of commitment varies.
- Self-reliant achiever (D4): High competence and commitment.

The developmental level is determined by each individual's level of competence and commitment is diagrammatically shown in Figure 3.
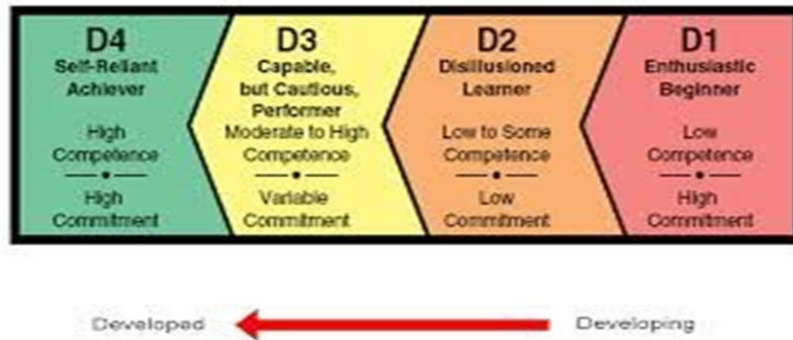
Figure 3: Individual's level of commitment and competence (Wasim, 2010)

SLII proposes that effective leadership is dependent upon two key behaviors which are supporting and directing. Directing behaviors include giving specific directions and instructions and attempting to control the behavior of team members (Gilley et al., 2008). Supporting performances include actions such as encouraging subordinates, listening to them and offering acknowledgement and feedback. The theory identifies four basic leadership styles including:

- Directing (S1): High on directing behaviors, low on supporting behaviors.
- Coaching (S2): High on both directing and supporting behaviors.
- Supporting (S3): Low on directing behavior and high on supporting behaviors.
- Delegating (S4): Low on both directing and supporting behaviors.

The main point of SLII theory is that not one of these four leadership styles is best. As an alternative, an effective leader will match his or her behavior to the developmental skill of each subordinate for the task at hand.

5. Important Situational Factors for Consideration

Experts suggest that there are four key contextual factors that leaders must be aware of when making an assessment of the situation in the mining sector (Abou-Moghli, 2015). These factors include:

I. Leaders in the mining sector need to consider the relationship between the leaders and the members of the team. Societal and relational factors can play a role in determining which approach is best. A team that lacks effectiveness and productivity might benefit from a style that emphasizes order, rules and clearly defined roles. A self-motivated team of highly accomplished workers, on the other hand, might benefit from a more democratic style that allows team members to work self-sufficiently and have input in organizational resolutions.
II. The level of power the leader has over team members should also be well-thought-out. Some leaders have power conversed by the position itself, such as the ability to hire, fire, reward or rebuke subordinates. Other leaders gain power over their relations with employees, often by gaining respect from them, proposing support to them and helping them feel counted in in the decision-making process.
III. The leader wants to consider the task itself. Tasks can array from simple to difficult, but the leader needs to have a clear impression of exactly what the task involves in order to determine if it has been effectively and knowledgeably accomplished.

As the Hersey-Blanchard model recommends, leaders need to study the level of maturity of each individual team member (Silverthorne and Wang, 2001). The maturity level is a measure of an individual's capability to complete a task, as well as his or her readiness to complete the task. Passing on a job to a member who is willing but lacks the ability is a recipe for disappointment. Being able to identify each employee's level of maturity allows the leader to choose the best leadership approach to help employees accomplish their goals.

6. Conclusion

The leadership style has a very influential effect on employee's productivity, directly impacting organizational performance. Effective leadership style motivates employees to reach desired organizational goals, promoting good leadership that leads to an increase in employee's productivity. It's very critical for a firm to understand the relation between leadership style and employee's productivity. It can be concluded that employees working in the mining sector are influenced by situational leadership behaviours of their managers.

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Biographies

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