

# Leadership Approaches

## Behavioural Approach

The shortcomings of the trait theory led to a significant change in the emphasis of leadership approach. This shift in emphasis began to focus attention on the actual Behavior and actions of leaders as against personal qualities or traits of leaders. According to this approach, leadership involves an interpersonal relationship between a leader and subordinates in which the Behavior of the leader towards the subordinates constitute the most critical element. The good Behavior of the leader raises the morale, builds up confidence and spirit among the team members and lack of good Behavior will discard him as a leader.

Behavioral theories of leadership are based on the belief that great leaders are made, not born. According to this theory, people can learn to become leaders through training and observations, thus, anyone can become a leader if they want to. Leadership is composed of two general kinds of behaviors: task behavior and relationship behavior. Task behavior focus on goal accomplishment and help subordinates in achieving their behavior while relationship behavior help subordinates to feel comfortable at workplace. Central focus of this approach is to examine how leaders combine these two types of behavior in order to make subordinates to put their efforts to reach a goal.

### Two important behavioral theories are:

1. Michigan Studies
2. Ohio State University Leadership Studies

### 1. Michigan Studies:

These empirical studies were conducted slightly after World War II by the Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan. The purpose of these studies was to identify styles of leadership behavior that results in higher performance and satisfaction of a group.

These studies distinguished between two distinct styles of leadership:

#### 1) Production Centered Leadership:

- Rigid work standards, procedure and rules
- Close supervision of the subordinates
- Technical aspect of the job

- Employees were not to be considered as human beings but as tools to accomplish the goals of the organizations.

## **2) Employee Centered Leadership:**

- To treat subordinates as human beings.
- To show concern for the employees needs, welfare, advancement etc.
- To encourage employee participation in goal setting and in other work related decisions.
- To help ensure high performance by inspiring respect and trust.

### **The findings of Michigan studies were as follows:**

- 1) These studies found that both the styles of leadership led to increase in production, but it was slightly more in case of production oriented style.
- 2) On the other hand, production oriented style led to decreased satisfaction and increased turnover and absenteeism.
- 3) The employee centered approach led to improved work flow procedures and more cohesion in interactions resulting in increased satisfaction and decreased turnover and absenteeism.

## **2. Ohio State University Leadership Studies:**

The Bureau of Research at Ohio State University conducted these studies. The main objective of the studies was to identify the major dimensions of leadership and to investigate the effect of leader's behavior on employee behavior and satisfaction.

### **Ultimately, these studies narrowed the description of leader behavior to two dimensions:**

**1) Initiating Structure:** It refers to the leader's behavior in defining and organizing the relationship between him and members of the group.

#### **The purpose of initiating structure is to:**

- (a) Establish well defined patterns of organization.
- (b) Develop channels of communications and methods or procedures.
- (c) To supervise the activities of employees.

**2) Consideration:** Consideration refers to the behavior which can be characterized by:

- (a) Friendliness
- (b) Mutual trust
- (c) Respect
- (d) Supportiveness
- (e) Openness
- (f) Concern for the welfare of employees

The basic feature of this theory is that leadership behavior is plotted on two axes rather than on a single continuum.

## Situational Approach

Situational leadership is a leadership style that has been developed and studied by Kenneth Blanchard and Paul Hersey. Situational leadership refers to when the leader or manager of an organization must adjust his style to fit the development level of the followers he is trying to influence. With situational leadership, it is up to the leader to change his style, not the follower to adapt to the leader's style. In situational leadership, the style may change continually to meet the needs of others in the organization based on the situation.

Situational Leadership is flexible. It adapts to the existing work environment and the needs of the organization. Situational Leadership is not based on a specific skill of the leader; instead, he or she modifies the style of management to suit the requirements of the organization.

One of the keys to Situational Leadership is adaptability. Leaders must be able to move from one leadership style to another to meet the changing needs of an organization and its employees. These leaders must have the insight to understand when to change their management style and what leadership strategy fits each new paradigm.

According to the situational approach, the effectiveness of a leader depends upon the situation in which leadership is exercised. **Leadership is a function of the leader, the led or followers and the situation.** There is an interaction between the leader and the group. People tend to follow the leader when they perceive him to be capable of fulfilling their aspirations. Thus, a leader is a means of achieving the goals of the group and of its members. The main situational variables are the type of the organization, the nature of the task or job and the working environment. According to the situational theory, leadership is situational, i.e., effectiveness of leadership is affected by the situation from which a leader emerges and in which he works. In other words, the situation the group, the problem and its environment will affect the type of leadership. An important aspect of this theory is the interaction between the group and its leader within the parameters of the organization and the situational factors as shown in figure.

This theory advocates that leadership is strongly affected by the situation from which a leader emerges and in which he works. It is based on the assumptions that there exists an interaction between a group and its leader and that people tend to follow the person (known as leader) who is capable of fulfilling their aspirations. Thus, leader is a means of achieving the goals of the group and the members. He recognizes the need of the situation and then acts accordingly.

### Merits of Situational Approach

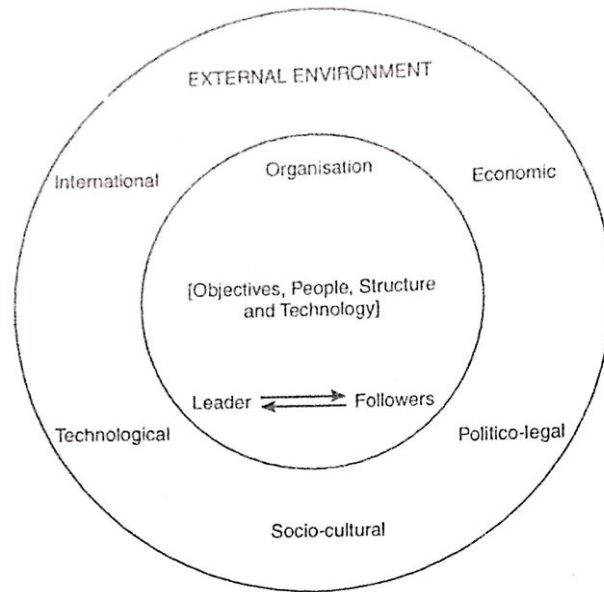
The focus in the situational approach to leadership is on observed behavior and not on any hypothetical inborn or acquired ability or potential for leadership. In other words, the emphasis is on the behavior of leaders and their followers and the type of situation. Leadership process is thus a function of the leader, the followers and the situation. It can best be explained in terms of the interaction between the leader, those being led and the nature of situation in which they operate.

The leader recognizes his followers' needs and adopts such methods (depending on the situation) which satisfy them. The main thrust of the situational theory is that the leadership style may be effective under one situation and ineffective under the other. In other words, situational theory emphasizes that **there is no one best style of leadership universally applicable to all situations** and that the leader has to change his style of leadership from situation to situation. If the leader adopts the same style under all situations, he may not be successful. For example, Winston Churchill was the most effective and successful Prime Minister of Britain during the period of the Second World War, but he was a flop afterwards when the situation changed.

### Criticism of Situational Approach

Though this theory states leadership ability of an individual in a given situation and measures his leadership potentialities, it is silent on the point whether this individual will fit in another situation. The situational theory suffers from the following weaknesses:

- (i) It gives much emphasis on situation aspect and overlooks the qualities needed in a successful leader.
- (ii) Leadership is a subjective consideration in which qualities of head and heart of a leader play their part. But this theory overlooks this aspect.



Situational Model of Leadership.