

The Importance of Distinguishing Between "Leadership and Management" In Practice and Its Applicability to The Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: Whether leadership and management should be distinguished in organizational contexts has long been a topic of academic debate. In a context where it is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic will also have a lasting impact on the international economic environment, it seems particularly important to assess the importance and applicability of the distinction between the two. This paper will critically evaluate the necessity of this distinction between the two concepts and discuss how this distinction applicable to the Covid-19 pandemic, with a view to providing more focused recommendations and guidance for corporations (especially MNEs) in managing in the context of the pandemic.

Keywords: Leadership, Management, Covid-19 pandemic.

1. Introduction

Whether leadership and management should be distinguished in organizational contexts has long been a topic of academic debate. As Bennis and Nannus (1985) said, "the managers do things right, but leaders do right things." [1] Leadership seems to focus on how to affect others (Hughes, 2009) [2], whereas management stresses the process of directing and controlling organizational groups (Wienclaw, 2021) [3]. They seem different, yet it is difficult to separate them in practice completely. As the Covid-19 pandemic results in the change from people's lifestyle to global trends in politics and economy, it is necessary to consider whether and how the distinction between them is applicable in the current context. The following section analyses these questions.

2. The Necessity of Distinction

It is undeniable that the distinction between management and leadership in practice can help organizations to develop better strategies in response to various situations and for different intended purposes. Firstly, although both imply "power" and "command" to some extent (Lunenburg, 2020; Grint, 2020) [4] [5], a considerable body of research, led by Zaleznik (2004) [6], shows that management is more about tolerance, stability and a win-win situation, a process-oriented strategy (and sometimes even manipulation) that checks and balances forces and sets tasks for members to complete. The ultimate aim of this process is to expect the organization to maintain a controlled, rational and fair structure at the moment. Leadership, on the other hand, promotes innovation, the desire to solve problems and achieve goals fundamentally, and focuses on motivating and encouraging members, making bold plans (even sometimes are risky) and emphasizing mental taming (Zaleznik, 2004; Gaggiotti and Marre, 2004). This is also why group members are usually emotionally attached to the leader (like global mourning to Steve Jobs's death) and believe that the leader figure is often charismatic (Zaleznik, 2004 [7]; Gaggiotti and Marre [8], 2004; Bell and Taylor, 2016) [9], it requires the ability to transcend the work

environment, rather than a strong sense of belonging to the organization, as managers do. In these cases, A good manager is not equal to a good leader. Thus, leadership and management are more like two key competencies, two distinct but complementary systems of action in organizations (Kotter, 1990; cited by LUNENBURG, 2020) [10], which are needed in varying degrees by organizations in different social contexts. At this level, distinguishing between them has an absolutely significant meaning.

3. Unnecessity of Excessive Distinction

There is such a sharp distinction between leadership and management. However, as mentioned above, they are complementary in practice, which illustrates that it is pointless to distinguish between the two concepts overly. Firstly, from a semantic point of view, it is difficult to translate and demonstrate the difference between "leadership" and "management" in the national languages of countries with different linguistic systems, such as the translation of leader in Spanish (líder) is associated with negative connotations like "violence, authoritarianism", which is avoided by native speakers (Gaggiotti and Marre, 2017) [11]. It implies that in the global context, from the members of the organization to the managers/leaders, the two concepts need to be experienced and understood more in practice. Secondly, although many studies have previously highlighted the progressive nature of leadership compared to management, a growing body of research suggests that the trend towards 'soft management has increased in recent years. Sturdy et al. (2014) [12], managers are also becoming more strategic in their approach to management, focusing on equality in communication, embracing newer agendas and what has been described as 'neo-bureaucratic management'. This change has made management invariably have more in common with leadership. Jarad (2012) sees leadership as part of management and argues that they both have a substantial positive effect on organizational performance (cited by Liphadzi et al., 2017) [13]. This shows that for leadership and management, there is an overlap in what the two concepts cover, and they influence and interact with each other.

Therefore, it is undesirable to overemphasize the distinction between the two.

4. Applicability to the Covid-19 Pandemic

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that taking advantage of the respective strengths and synergies between leadership and management, based on a good distinction between their respective characteristics, can help companies and even countries to survive the crisis and even achieve better development during the pandemic period. On the one hand, from its characteristics, many studies have indicated that the advantages of leadership have stood out in the political and organizational environment during the covid-19 crisis because of the positive employee happiness and social well-being effects that can be built up in the face of the growing social inequalities caused by the economic recession when face to the epidemic (Bailey and Breslin, 2020)[14]. It is possible to alleviate some of the fear of uncertainty in the current social environment and to appear more ethical to organizations (governments, companies, etc.). But on the other hand, relatively strong management tools such as rules and regulations must be matched at the same time. A good case in point is that China faced a new outbreak, both in Wuhan at the end of 2020 and in Tianjin this year, with compulsory universal covid-19 testing and blockade search sections, the government also make efforts to ensure the supply of face masks and household goods on the other. Although this has been criticized in some studies as a 'lack of human rights' (Swart, 2020) [20], the epidemic in China has been relatively effectively controlled, with a high level of public compliance and relatively few emotional extremists (Liu, Yue and Tchounwou, 2020)[15]. As Grint (2020) suggests[16], if demonstrating leadership can make the public face up to unfortunate facts, then people should also manage both research and resources to keep the systems working properly.

5. Conclusion

It has been argued that in the current turbulent and ambiguous environment, we need a new generation of leaders rather than managers (Bennis, cited by Liphadzi et al., 2017). But the power of 'management' in organizations has not been absent in the last few years either. There is no perfect theory, and there is no infallible organization. In the current epidemic, the most important issue is to distinguish between management and leadership, to find commonalities and differences, and to make them work better for the development of the organization. In other words, meeting the challenge by changing in "business as usual" (Amis and Janz, 2020).

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