

Schematic Representation of Bridging Artistic Skills and Leadership Styles



Qistina Donna Lee Abdullah, Khashini Devi R. Varatharajoo

Abstract: Leadership in this digital era is currently gaining lots of attention from all over the world including Malaysia. It is like a life to all organizations as it is merely impossible to move forward without leadership. This 21st century world and generation demand for a more different leadership practice which is more flexible. Basically, it all lies in the hands of a leader on how strategic the leadership is going to be and how well a team's talent can be extracted. This paper presents a conceptual framework that studies the artistic skills and leadership characteristics to be included in the leadership styles. This paper also addresses the independent variables and the dependent variables which formed the whole framework. Systematic review methodology is employed whereby data are obtained from evidenced literatures. The justification behind choosing each and every variables are provided based on valid literature sources. Art is being bridged into leadership for a newer change and experience. Explanations are also provided on how this framework actually works. This framework serves as guideline which is applicable to all organizations in the country. The main aim of this paper is to suggest a newer practice of leadership to bring a new and better change to the organization and country.

Keywords: Artistic skills, Behaviours, Leadership, Traits

I. INTRODUCTION

In this fast-paced world, everything needs to be updated and nothing survives based on the past concepts. Leadership is one of them as the success of the organization purely relies on the way it is being led. Malaysia recently had a new change whereby the former Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad has again taken the lead. It can be clearly seen that even leadership needs to be new and unique as time goes by. Leadership can be defined as “as a process where an individual influences a group of other individuals to achieve a common goal” (Alkahtani, 2016, p. 24). It is basically a process which includes guiding and mentoring the subordinates to bring the best out of them. Daft (2011) also defined leadership as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes and outcomes that reflect their shared purposes” (p. 5). There are various definitions for leadership. Leadership is not an easy process whereby a leader leads and the followers follow. It is way beyond in which a leader is able to lead the team well. Taking this world into consideration, organizations today definitely is in desperate need of an effective leadership. Thus, it certainly takes an effective leader to do so. A leader here is seen as “architects of the future” and “keeper of the vision” (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

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A leader needs to be authentic and creative in terms of leading the organization to produce an innovative team. Since leadership is a process of influencing, then a leader is someone who influences the followers to achieve the organizational goals. As mentioned, leadership now demands uniqueness and by incorporating artistic skills is able to bridge that gap in achieving uniqueness. Adler (2006) even proved that this 21st century generation demands for a more artistic approach of leadership inclusive of other aspects as well.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Concept

Before conceptual framework is being defined, the most underlying basic should be understood first which is concept. Concept is derived from the word conceptual framework in this case. What is a concept in terms of this research? Based on the definition from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, it is “an idea of how something is or how something should be done”. It is basically about describing something. Jabareen (2009) has mentioned the definition of concept based on the approach of Deleuze and Guattari (1991) which is “every concept has components and is defined by them” (p. 15). There are several aspects pointed out by Jabareen (2009) in his article on concept:

- It is produced from something.
- It is related to other concepts as it is originated from other concepts.
- Point of coincidence, condensation or accumulation of its own components

This shows that concept is something which did not exist as it alone by itself whereby it is comprised of several elements which make it to exist as one.

B. Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is an important aspect of a research as it provides guidance towards completing the research. As mentioned, concept does not stand on its own and is relatable to other concepts. The same thing applies to a conceptual framework. Several related concepts comes together to form an interrelated connection which forms a framework and it is called the conceptual framework. Basically, conceptual framework is defined “as a network, or a plane, of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon” (Jabareen, 2009, p.51). Conceptual framework is also a product of bringing all the related concepts together to provide a broader understanding of a research (Imenda, 2014).



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It gives an explanation of the research in a visual form. Imenda (2014) explained further that a research does not offer a complete meaning by just based on one theory. It requires a synthesizing of several views and concepts which then creates a conceptual framework. A conceptual framework is crucial as it guides the researcher on his scope of research and ways to conduct the reserch. It aids the researcher to choose the right method, suitable respondents and even ensure the research is on track without any deviation. Moreover, conceptual framework is constructed by the researcher based on other sources whereby it is not created solely by the researcher (Maxwell, 2005; Tamene, 2016). Researcher would refer to other frameworks and adopt certain parts to construct a new framework of his research. Adopting from other sources is necessary to make sure the data is reliable in forming a new framework. Thus, is neither taken fully from a previously existed framework nor a brand new is constructed.

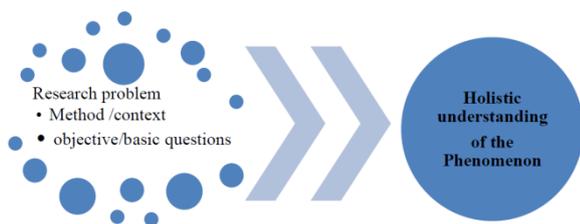


Figure 1: Schematic representation of conceptual framework (Tamene, 2016)

Figure 1 represents ideas and concepts which creates a framework that provides an understanding developed by Tamene (2016). This figure depicts that understanding a research is all about knowing the research problem, objectives, scope and methods to achieve the objective and all this can be represented in a conceptual framework. Not only that, a conceptual framework is represented in a form of arrows and diagrams to clearly convey the variables and the relationships (Adom, Hussein & Agyem, 2018). They further added that a good conceptual framework has to have an explanation on the relationships of the variables as well as how is it going to aid in terms of solving the research problems.

III. METHODOLOGY TO NEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The methodology employed in this research is the systematic review method. Systematic review is whereby the data obtained from comprehensive literatures are combined which results in a valid inference (Crowther, Lim & A. Crowther, 2010). The researcher chose guidelines, theories and models from sources of literature available as a method to obtain information. The sources of literatures serve as a guideline to develop the new conceptual framework. The theories are of valid sources which contribute to the validity of the new conceptual framework. Artistic skills and leadership characteristics which include traits, behaviours and styles are the theories obtained from the literature. Figure 2 below depicts the step by step process in a simplified form.

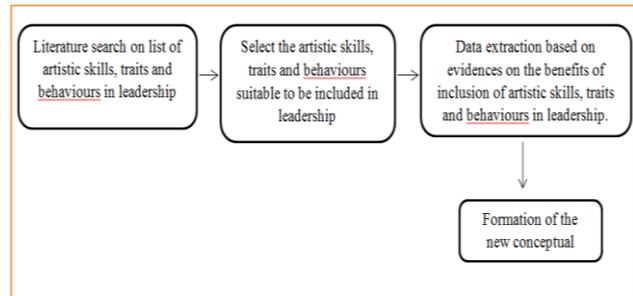


Figure 2: Methodology

IV. FINDINGS

A. Artistic Skills

Artistic skill is the very first item in this conceptual framework. Art is considered to be something very pure. According to a well-known Russian writer and author, Leo Tolstoy, art is “a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them (Tolstoy, 1896). In other words, art is an activity whereby it involves transmission of feelings between the sender and the receiver. For an example, a story-teller brings his story alive by being expressive so that his audiences are able to feel the story as well. This is applicable in the leadership context whereby followers will have the same drive conveyed by their leaders. Thus, it certainly depends on the way a leader applies artistic skills in leading the team. Adler (2006) further supported that today’s world are demanding for a leadership with more artistic skills than just a constrained pragmatism and it is time to link artistic skills and leadership. Moreover, most of the followers nowadays certainly do not prefer a rigid leadership style to work in. Linking artistic skills and leadership does not imply that leaders have to learn arts or come from an arts background. It simply means that qualities of artists can be implemented in a leader in leadership. An article from leaderonomics stated that leaders who adopt artistic skills tend to be forced to think outside the box and drive them towards changes (Gamache, 2016). This will indeed aid leaders to plan ahead in this fast paced world which is an aspect where employees really look upon from their leaders today. Adler (2006) also advocates that artistic skills will bring out those strategic thinking skills as relying on just logical thinking is insufficient. Artistic skills tend to evoke creativity, innovativeness, imaginativeness and many more in a leader. Since, implying artistic skills in to leadership brings about to a new change according to this digital era, it creates a new environment to be excited to work in as well. Table 1 below illustrates the aspects of artistic skills which have already been identified in previous studies. Based on the table, rather than having every aspects noted down in the framework, it is characterized as whole as ‘artistic skills’ according to this research. Thus, this research intends to look into more artistic skills to be incorporated into leadership today.

Creativity Imaginative Authenticity Innovative Expressive

Table 1: List of Artistic Skills or Qualities

B. Leadership Characteristics

The second item in this framework is Trait which is an important aspect in leadership. Trait is something that focuses on a leaders' attributes like skills, personality and values (Aalateeg, 2017). It has to be possessed by leaders for the effectiveness of both the leader and the organization. Every manager can call themselves as leaders or feel like a leader but in reality it not as easy as it seems to be for that entitlement. These traits they possess are the ones that builds them as a leader and make them stand out compared to non-leaders. Researches has also showed that having particular set of traits alone do not aid in leading the team but this does not mean that traits are to be ignored as something unimportant (Ahmed & Bach, 2014). This is because, the main way a leader leads the millennials comes from his traits. This means that the trait a leader possess is the one the leader will portray while leading the team. The main trait in leadership that everyone look upon is being ethical and the foremost trait of being ethical is honesty and integrity. George (2003) mentioned that "integrity is not just the absence of lying, but telling the whole truth, as painful as it may be" (p. 20). Basically, the trust of followers is mainly depending on a leader's honesty. Apart from that, there are many other traits that are essential in leadership in this digital era to retain and develop the millennials. This is because, followers would like to notice and engage in the leadership traits portrayed without only having the thought that leaders do acquire those traits (Hossain, 2015). A leader's trait is something to be paid attention to as well to prevent the employees from leaving due to dissatisfaction in terms of leadership. Figure 2 below points out some traits or skills to be acquired by leaders. This aspect is suitable and appropriate in terms of leadership in this digital era. This framework is referred particularly as it is the recent leadership theory a leader should follow. The third item in this framework is behaviour which is the second aspect categorized under leadership characteristics. The most basic definition of behaviour from the English Oxford Living Dictionaries (2018) is the way a person represents or conducts himself towards others basically referring on how a person or things are acted upon. This is certainly an important aspect as the way leaders act towards leading the subordinates plays a major role in retaining and developing them. In leadership terms, behaviour of a leader is seen as the way a leader behaves which then is developed into leadership styles (Sharkawi, Mohamad & Roslin, 2016). Both traits and behaviour are related in a way and that is why is is categorized together in this research. It is said that behaviour has a greater influence towards leadership effectiveness as a leader's trait is the one that predisposes them to a certain behaviour (Derue, Nahrgang, Wellman & Humphrey, 2011). This explain why behaviour of a leader needs to be paid attention to as well. This is because, if mellinnials talents are needed to be maximised, then leaders should have a proper way of approach instead of being bossy. Martin (2005) further proved that treating millennials as colleagues without relying on hierarchy only tend to

increase their commitment. Thus, the way a leader treats his followers acts as a key towards leadership effectiveness. The way a person behaves in leading a team clearly picturizes whether that person is a leader or a 'boss'. Hossain (2015) mentioned that a leader's action is his mark of a good leader. A desirable act certainly will influence positivity in the team. For an instance, a leader involves the employees in taking any decision by allowing them to voice out opinions or even makes decision instead of just acting like a boss and makes all the decision then order them. This will make them feel more satisfied and happier to work with their leader. Since there is diversity in the workforce, leaders are required to adjust their behaviour to change-oriented in order to cope with current era (Bahadur, Bano and Wahab, 2017). This is mainly because, depending on older behavioural approach like how they used to deal will not work. Thus, based on the Figure 3 below, behavioural approach is also appropriate and important contributor to this research. Leadership style is another item of this framework. Leadership is all about influencing the followers and style is about the approach. In this context, leadership style is the approach of how a leader influences the subordinates. To be more precise, leadership style is the way in which leaders use to drive and inspire followers, enact all plans and guiding through the right pathway (Alkahtani, 2016; Northhouse, 2015). Wakabi (2016) proved this statement whereby when it comes to assessing a leader's performance, the leadership style is first thing that is seen. This is because, a leader's traits makes up his behaviour and that behaviour is the one develops a leadership style. Thus, the way a leader inspires his followers and guides them is an important aspect as it reflects their behaviour and traits as an effective leader or not. For an example, a leader should be able to think and plan ahead in terms of preparing for any hard times by including their followers as well instead of just wait for any problems to arise then think of solutions. This portrays that an effective leader is always working in long terms ahead and including followers also shows that the leader is developing them. According to Figure 3, transformational and transactional leadership has been categorised in leadership style in the new framework. This is indeed the most appropriate aspect of this research as it aims to incorporate artistic skills and leadership characteristics.

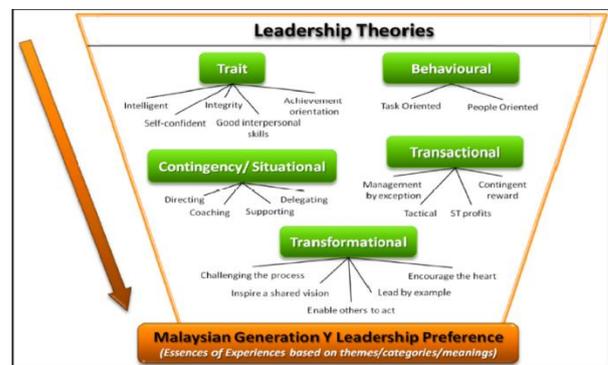


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework for Exploring Gen Y Employees' Leadership Preferences (Sharkawi, Mohamad & Roslin, 2016)

V. RESULTS OF NEW FRAMEWORK

Figure 4: Conceptual Framework of Reshaping the Workforce in Digital Era

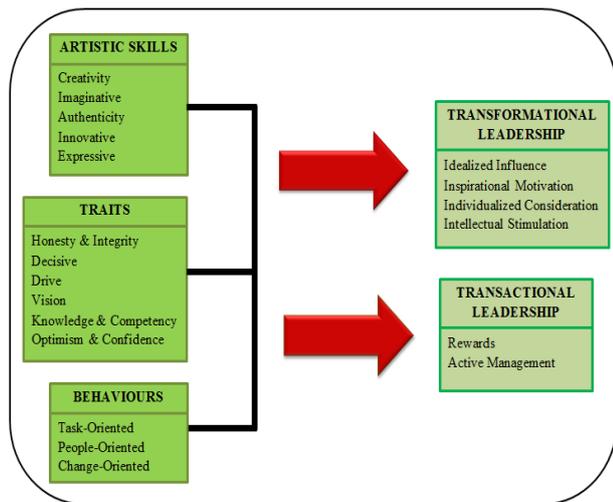


Figure 4 above represents the results of the new proposed framework. The independent variables are artistic skills, traits and behaviours whereas the dependent variable is leadership styles of transformational and transactional leadership. This newly developed framework studies about the artistic skills and leadership characteristics that can be incorporated into the leadership styles to reshape the workforce. Besides that, this framework also included a new item of artistic skills to come up with a different kind of leadership rather than just focusing on the basics of traits and behaviour alone like in the past researches. But this definitely does not indicate that trait and behaviour is not important. In fact those are the most underlying basic aspect of a leader. In order to cope with the diversity in the workforce and competitive world, a change to a more innovative, creative and authentic leadership is demanded. This is because depending on old tricks or even renewing the same old tricks is not going to work today.

VI. CONCLUSION

Artistic skills are known to promote flexibility in a workplace which promotes to creating a fun environment which every employees prefer. Traits and behaviours on the other hand are the basic essentials to be included in leadership in which it would not be successful without them. The newer part of this leadership is the inclusion and incorporation of artistic skills together with traits and behaviours into leadership styles. The findings depicts that artistic skills, leadership traits and behaviours are suitable and valid independent variables to be included into the conceptual framework to be incorporated into the leadership styles. It was also further proven by literatures that leadership today is in demand of these independent variables. As conclusion, this framework is valid to be applied in order to reshape the workforce in this digital era.

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Khashini Devi a/p R. Varatharajoo is a student pursuing Masters in Arts in University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). She has graduated with Bachelor of Applied Arts with Honours majoring in Arts Management field. She has published an article on transformational leadership and its functionality in the International Journal of Business and Society. She has been awarded with the best thesis and research for the same topic of study. Her current research is on incorporating artistic skills to enhance leadership style in leading the current millennials. Studying on leadership is her passion and she aims to research further on this field. She also possesses some experience in the education field by aiding her supervisor in taking up tutorial classes and small scaled lectures. While in her working career, she has extensive experience in the sales department as well as dealing with clients professionally.