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**AN EXAMINATION OF THE INTERSECTION OF LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS: WHY SOME EXCELLENT MANAGERS ARE SUCH POOR LEADERS**

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Abstract

Are leaders born or are they made? This question is asked on the first day of every freshman leadership class. The question is normally posed in a philosophical context. But in point of fact when presented as an opening challenge in a class on leadership the question must invoke a very practical concern. In classes in which the learning outcomes include the fostering of effective leadership skills among the students of the class, or enhancing leadership skill performance, the answer must be that leaders can be made in order for the class to have any validity. If leaders cannot be made (taught) then every class in leadership is reduced to pointlessness. In this paper the authors examine the literature with the goal of enumerating the quasi-complete set of leadership skills and management skills. The authors will examine the coincidence of leadership and management skills along with the factors impacting the likelihood that leadership and management skills can coexist in one person.

The premise

In the contemporary business environment leadership is frequently viewed as a subset of management. That is to say that being a leader is somehow subservient to being a manager. That the skill set employed in the execution of the function of leadership, while it may be different from the overall management skill set, is part and parcel of the management skill set. One need only consult the website of the American Management Association (AMA, 2014) to arrive at the conclusion that the contemporary approach to leadership and management is at least that they overlap and possibly significantly so. Moreover, the value in the present investigation rests in the conjecture that proper employment of leadership and management skills are contributory to organizational success (Richardson, 1995).

Cataloging the skills

As we move toward a complete understanding of the two skill sets in question, we are fortunate to acknowledge the existence to two organizations which serve as the leaders in the respective fields of management and of leadership. We turn to these two organizations to guide our exploration. One of the organizations, the American Management Association (AMA) directly provides us with the cluster of skills which the organization embraces as the framework for excellence in both management and leadership. The other organization, the International Leadership Association (ILA) does not venture to specifically enumerate the skills that make up the leadership skill set. General guidance on the topic must be inferred from the literature they provide. The repertoire of skills is forwarded by these two organizations not as a complete set of skills in either case but as a starting point as we strive to round out the skill sets with additional exploration. Hence we will begin with the skill sets presented by the two organizations but we will not likely end with them.
The approach of the AMA is notable. When compared with ILA the AMA appears to be more comprehensive. Indeed the AMA addresses itself to leadership issues in the various training modules it offers. However it does so within the context of business management. There is, according to the content of AMA training, a common set of six competencies in management and within those competencies are to be found the leadership skill set. The function of the skill set is to create a leader who is an “enabler”, an “engager”, and an “artist”.

**Leadership Skill Set**

As a basis the authors begin by examining various definitions of the concept known as “leadership”. One commonality in the various definitions is the inclusion the word “inspire” or the concept of “inspiring”. It is pertinent to note at this point that people can be inspired, however things can’t. This fact will be useful as the reader attempts to understand the functioning of the skills. It means that the catalog of leadership skills includes only those which may be applied to people rather than things (Eager-Sirkis, 2011). Whereas leaders lead people, managers manage things and people. However the skills that a manager uses to manage things are the same skills the manager uses to manage people. The employment of good leadership skills becomes a force multiplier in management.

Pashke, (2004) conjectures that leaders must be good communicators. This means that they listen empathetically and speak professionally. They must possess self confidence and self awareness. Other authors (Jackson, 2009 and Pace & Easter, 2005) advise frequent self-analysis. Leaders must be able to conceptualize at a strategic level. They must be critical thinkers. Finally they must be able to identify with others, a second manifestation of empathy. An additional trait in a high quality leader is the ability to create a motivating environment (Kuttner, 2011 & Hulme, 2006) however, this may actually be a result of the employment of other leadership skills and not a skill of its own. Research in Great Britain (Pace & Esther, 2005) revealed that good leaders are humble. A domestic study, (Bret, Gulliya, & Crispo, 2012) adds the group of skills contributing to emotional intelligence including recognition of emotions in those being led, using those emotions to guide leader reactions, and understanding and controlling one’s own emotions.

In a tabular format the skills may be expressed as the Leadership Big Ten:

1. Communication skills
2. Self confidence
3. Self awareness
4. Self analysis
5. Strategic thinking
6. Critical thinking
7. Empathy
8. Ability to motivate
9. Humility
10. Emotional intelligence
This list may not be fully comprehensive, but it is supported by the relevant literature and comports with the guidance provided by the AMA and the ILA. It is also pertinent to note that the presence of these skills and the operation of the skills in leadership endeavors are in keeping with the AMA’s position that a good leader must be an “enabler” and an “engager”. Whether the leader must be an “artist” is less obvious.

The skills enumerated above can be organized into two categories. The first category is comprised of skills which contribute to the leader’s personal competence. These may include self awareness and self analysis, self confidence, and strategic and critical thinking. In the second category are those skills contributing to social competence. The list consists of communication skills, empathy, humility, emotional intelligence, and if it is indeed a separate skill, the ability to motivate.

There are challenges to the rationale for inclusion of a given skill in one set or the other. The authors are admittedly exposed to the charge, for example, that humility contributes simultaneously to personal and social competence. However, the point of organizing the skills thus, is not to achieve complete accuracy in the concept. The point is to demonstrate that leadership and the employment of leadership skills is complex and multidimensional. In a way, it defies a systematic and consistently accurate portrayal. A detractor might declare that the logical extension of this complexity is that it is difficult if not impossible to learn the skills; therefore it is pointless to try to teach the skills. As shall be seen, nothing could be further from the truth.

The discussion is made trickier as we consult Caruso and Salovey (2004), who found that while leadership skills may be honed with training, there may be innate progenitors of the skills which are clearly not universally present in all managers. His findings emerge as a second list of leadership traits as follows:

- Being non-defensive
- Being able to frame emotions effectively
- Being able to communicate
- Being exposed to good emotional role models
- Having been nurtured in a bio-socially adaptive environment in the formative years

A cursory examination of Caruso and Salovey’s findings reveals that there is overlap with the opinions of other researchers in his first three assertions. However one must admit that the last two features of Salovey’s work and the presence of these two traits in a given manager are not the result of deliberate learning. They are the result of mere happenstance which a given leader may or may not have enjoyed. Again we turn to the detractor’s hypotheses. The detractor’s H1 would be, “There is a direct correlation between exposure to good emotional role models and leadership skills.” H2 would be, “There is a direct correlation between being nurtured in a bio-socially adaptive environment and leadership skills.” If divine providence or scholarly research proves either of these hypotheses, we are compelled to conclude that the relationship might be causal and therefore that the absence of either of Salovey’s last two traits in any manager, consigns that manager to lackluster leadership. It means potentially that any manager who has not been bio-socially nurtured and who does not have good emotional role models will never learn to be a good leader.
As the detractor rests his case on the proof of his H1 and H2, the authors are assisted in supporting the null hypothesis of H1 and H2 by Ananthram and Nankervis (2013) who declare that leadership skills reside in the cognitive domain. They state in their study that just as persons may be predisposed one way or the other to learning good management skills, they are also predisposed one way or the other to learning good leadership skills. Hence the manager who is challenged as described in the last sentence of the previous paragraph may be predisposed to lead in ineffective ways without leadership training interventions. However this manager is not inhibited by his environmental exposure in his ability to learn leadership techniques. The aspiring leader may have to work harder to develop leadership skills, but nonetheless, those skills may be mastered. On the other hand, the manager who has benefitted from bio-socially adaptive nurturing and who has developed a support structure which includes good emotional role models may find it easier to learn good leadership techniques. Indeed he may not need to learn them as the techniques may be included as naturally existing tools in his leadership toolbox.

We are left to conclude that while some managers may find it difficult to master the leadership skill set, all managers are trainable as leaders. The contemporary literature supports this conclusion (Kuttner, 2009 and Bret et al. 2012). Any organization which has as part of its mission, the transfer of leadership skills to students or the development of leadership skills in its stakeholders will be much relieved by this position. They may proceed in their efforts with no lurking suspicion that they are wasting their time or resources.

Management Skill Set

The reader’s attention is invited to the set of skills that are deemed to be essential in the good manager. Again let it be stated that this expose’ is informed by the position of the AMA and will be elucidated later. As the narrative proceeds the reader is encouraged to consider the nuances of overlap of the various skills.

Again to begin the examination of leadership skills, a definition of what management is must be established. Again one may cite a commonality in the various definitions available and that commonality is control of people and things. It is worthwhile at this juncture to call the reader’s attention to the word, “things” in the definition compilation. The idea that the manager manages people and things but the leader leads only people has been mentioned previously.

The authors rely not only upon a very recent study (Eddy, 2013) but consult also a salient work from decades past (Schwartz, 1988) to form the basis of the list of management skills. As before, the list will be expanded and accurized as additional scholars are consulted. Beginning with Eddy, the management skills start with organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism. Two of Eddy’s skill will be omitted, thus. Initially, community college advocacy is on her list because of the scope of her work. This will be omitted as it does not inform the present, more general inquiry. Professionalism will also be ignored as it is difficult to quantify and may indeed be a paper of its own. Ananthram and Nankervis (2013) contribute the ability to think critically and confidently and the ability to conceptualize programs to the growing list. Wimpheimer (2004) reports that comprehension of financial, social and political issues is important. Wang and
Ashcroft (2012) speak about the importance of conducting effective meetings. Mouchi, Rotimi, and Ramachandra (2011) support Eddy (2013). The list of skills comprising the management skill set is now relatively complete. Other authors repeat but do not supplement the list in a material way. Here is the Management Big Ten.

1. Comprehension of strategy
2. Comprehension of financial issues
3. Comprehension of social and public policy issues
4. Assignment and stewardship of resources including time
5. Ability to communicate
6. Ability to collaborate
7. Self confidence
8. Ability to think critically
9. Ability to conceptualize programs
10. Conducting effective meetings

Again the authors must hasten to report that this list may not be comprehensive but it does include ten top traits in a good manager. It is also in keeping with the position of the AMA and contemporary scholars. Indeed Tushabomwe-Kazooba (2006) points to the absence of many of these skills as rationale for the collapse of many small businesses.

Comparison of the skills

As regards the nuances of overlap the reader may be struck by the fact that several of the traits are to be found on both the leadership and the management list. Communication is a prominent example. For the moment let us consider the nature of communication supporting leadership endeavors in comparison with communication under the management function.

When a leader in his leadership capacity is communicating with those he is intending to lead, this communication generally is structured to engender support in the affective domain. This brand of communication is embodied in the maxim that leaders get their people to do things by making the people think it is their idea rather than the leader’s. Conversely, the manager’s communication is more likely devised to transfer information. This includes giving those being managed the information that they need to do something.

Going just a bit further, if a manager needs to get his people to do something, he may employ his management function or he may invoke leadership. As an example, let us assume that the issue is punctuality and the manager is hoping to get all of his people to show up for work on time. As a manager he tells them the appropriate time to report to work. He tells them he will monitor their arrival time and will reward those who adhere to his requirements and/or punish those who don’t. As the leader, his approach is to convince them that punctuality is a worthy behavior. They report on time because they want to and not because they have to. This brief vignette elucidates the rationale for the commonality of the term “inspire” in the various definitions of leadership.

Consider also, self confidence which appears on both lists. The difference between a leader’s self confidence and that of the manager is less obvious. The leader may employ his air of self confidence to inspire his people. On the other hand, the manager’s self confidence will more
likely inspire himself. In effect the manager who is confident of his ability to be successful at a given task will be less reluctant to undertake the task. Building and using that confidence in one’s self is management. Conveying that confidence to others is leadership. Indeed the overlap here is substantive and as such the difference may be insignificant.

Finally the attention of the reader is called to the coexistence of critical thinking. Two most prolific writers on the topic of critical thinking give us the “Elements of Thought” (Paul & Elder, 2012). These elements include; Point of view, Purpose, Question at issue, Information, Interpretation and inference, Concepts, Assumptions, and Implications. It is right to declare that the tenets of critical thinking apply equally to management and to leadership. It is to Paul and Elder’s credit that the concepts are so well integrated that they are appropriate simultaneously to the domains of both leadership and of management.

**Two skill sets in one person**

The examination of the operation of the two skill sets reveals that the overlap of the two skill sets is neither substantive nor significant. Further, that the minor coincidences which do exist are not contradictory of the idea that the leadership skill set is essentially different from the management skill set. The two functions, leadership and management, are executed using discretely appropriate skills. The presence of management skills to a great extent does not assume the presence of leadership skills and vice versa. Nor does the solid management ability of any given manager mean that he or she can’t possibly be a good leader. In fact we are told (Gehring, 2007) that the coexistence of the two skill sets in a given manager is an essential component of success.

There is a solid defense of the AMA position that leadership should be viewed as a subset of management. The manager who is not a good leader is left with few tools at his disposal as he attempts to make his organization function (Hutt & Speh, 2007). He must resort essentially to coercion as a tactic for behavior modification. Bitsch and Olynk (2007) see the features as significantly overlapping however the nature of their study admits to the general approach of their research.

**Where is the Disconnect?**

In his examination of the issue, Pashke (2004) concludes that the increasing number of specialists in business and the corresponding specialization of their communication, management, and business skills perhaps contribute to deterioration in the ability or willingness to see others in an empathetic manner. The end result is a manager who is not expert at leadership which implies a conscious and perhaps even deliberate omission of leadership skills from the manager’s behavior. Indeed those persons who aspire to be good leaders do so because they see it is an important aspect of their work (Ingram & Cangemi, 2012).

As previously stated, managers manage people and things while leaders lead only people. According to Ingram and Cangemi, (2012) the leader has a management task but that task is managing himself. That is to say that leadership behavior can be described as system of conscious actions that serve to achieve the leader’s intended result. The leader must manage himself as he decides how to implement that system of actions. This builds upon Caruso and Salovey (2004) as they assert that leaders must manage their behaviors scrupulously avoiding emotion as a driver of those behaviors.
It has already been shown that leadership techniques as they reside in the cognitive domain can be taught. The proliferation of leadership training programs and courses in leadership attest to this fact. This supports the efforts of countless researchers over the last forty years.

Since good leadership rests upon the premise that leadership techniques must be employed consistently, the authors surmise that when managers are not good leaders, one of two things is true. In one case the manager fails to use good leadership behaviors because he or she is unfamiliar with the skill set. In the other case, the manager may be intimately familiar with the skill set but simply fail to use it or, worse yet, he may deliberately decline to use it. In either case the need for self awareness mentioned previously becomes obvious. Bradberry and Greaves (2005) concluded this self awareness was present in only one third of the participants in their study.

Not surprisingly, in building and using the skills, the process invokes two different domains in learning. The first involves the cognitive domain. As previously stated, leadership behaviors are cognitive in nature, thus, they can be learned. The scholarly community may examine the range of taxonomies in the Cognitive Domain from Benjamin Bloom (1956) to, a) inform as to the likelihood of success in teaching leadership techniques, and b) provide guidance as to the best method for teaching the skills. To be certain that managers will use the skill, managers must be made aware that the skills are valid and that using them is important. This is Krathwohl’s Affective Domain (Krathwohl, Bloom & Masia, 1973).

**Conclusion**

The review of scholarly thought on the topic of the interface of leadership and management leave these authors to conclude essentially two things. Primarily, there is good reason to believe that the tenets of solid leadership can be learned and that the teaching of the skills would respond to methodologies intended to address cognitive domain learning. Finally, and perhaps more importantly, once the techniques are learned the leader must be inclined to use them in a consistently applied human interface system.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The present examination is limited in scope and intended to serve only as a starting point for understanding good management and good leadership. The need for management training and the value of that training is so basic that it is part of leadership and management dogma. While the work assists one in understanding the Affective and Cognitive Domain features of the assimilation of leadership skills, it does not act to suggest specific methods for teaching those skills.

Another aspect of the discipline was not examined at all. Specifically, the authors did not address the aspects of personality which facilitate both learning the skills and using them once learned. Bloom and Krathwohl and their more contemporary disciples have set forth andrological methods for making contact in both the Cognitive and the Affective domain. The techniques for reaching students are different one from the other. Additional research might suggest the proper delivery, content, and sequence of a learning encounter which would emphasize first the
affective domain as a way of preparing the learner and then the cognitive domain to transfer the skills.

Additionally, the authors defended a connection between traits of the manager and a propensity to learn or to fail to learn leadership skills. Only one scholar was cited in the attempt to demonstrate that some managers are simply disinclined to learn or to use the skills. That scholar mentioned two facets of social development (an emotional nurturing developmental environment and the exposure to solid emotional role models) as progenitors of the development of leadership skills. A more comprehensive study of managers whose social development includes the two above mentioned features correlated to the degree to which they are successful at using the Leadership Big Ten might provide enlightening evidence.

There are likely other contributors to the rate and extent of assimilation of leadership skills. Consider for a moment, the likelihood that personality type, for example, the MBTI can be cited as a predictor of success. Research along those lines could be used to validate a potential hypothesis about a connection between MBTI and leadership success. A caution here; if research demonstrates a causal relationship between personality type and success in leadership, one might be tempted to infer that some managers may have a personality that precludes good leadership. This conclusion should be avoided in favor of simply declaring that some personality types might make use of more or different training in leadership.

Reference list


