

# Authentic Leadership and its Significance

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## ABSTRACT

Authentic leadership is related to situational cues and it is this contextual relevance of situational issues which ensures that excellence and a sense of belonging reinforce the explanatory potential of authentic leadership. Authentic leaders seek to evoke in followers a sense of non-authoritarian and non-heroic leadership practice in the attempt to separate leadership from the authoritarianism of the primal father figure.

When authenticity is used to predict organizational outcomes with sense of contribution omitted as an indicator, then authenticity explains 58.7% of the variance of organizational outcomes. This means that when sense of contribution is omitted from the model, the variance explained of organizational outcomes increases by more than 8%. This again reinforces the finding that authenticity does not reinforce sense of contribution as much as it determines sense of belonging and sense of freedom. Acknowledgement of weaknesses associated with cognitive abilities, motivation, social cognition and group dynamics is an important element of authentic leadership. Acknowledgement of such weaknesses increase the sense of belonging and perceptions of leaders being self-aware, balanced and transparent.

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## 1. Introduction

The ability of leaders to have a profound and extra-ordinary effect on their followers has been termed as a characteristic of their charisma. Research has also focused on the situational characteristics of leadership and attempted to study whether there are conceptual conflicts between the practices of leadership and management. Leadership is associated with deeper levels of meaning that is absent from much of leadership theory and research.

When leadership is combined with a desire to serve, then the characteristic of servant leadership emerges which attempts to build high quality dyadic relationships of trust. One of the important contributions of leadership is also to engage with the temporal dynamics of the team in order to ensure positive contributions to performance.

Leadership research thus seems to have focused on the characteristics of the leader, its implications for management, levels of meaning, quality of dyadic relationships and team performance. This indicates an emphasis on the personality of the leader and the functional benefits derived from the leader. Yet as the emphasis on the meanings involved in the phenomena of leadership indicates, the practice of leadership is often a socially shared space rather than a personality driven space, and while considering meanings, there may be a great advantage obtained from studying the aesthetics emerging from the practice of leadership. An insight into the aesthetics can provide insights into the practice of leadership in terms of the human meanings that makes leadership possible and sustains it. Such insights can indicate that leadership is not only about delivering instrumental ends, but also about touching the inner selves of human beings.

Extraverted leadership is successful in achieving results only when teachers are passive. It has been suggested that leadership could be understood in terms of pleasure at work and what influences followers to perform organizational goals at the behest of their leaders. The practice perspective of leadership emphasizes its social and relational character and de-emphasizes its individualist and traits character.

Leadership plays a significant role in enabling an educational institute to confront the problems that it faces. It is necessary to understand the collective and contextual features of leadership even as attempts are made to understand the plural characteristics that leadership can assume.

Thus, leadership research attempts to focus on social, collective and organizational issues, even as it endeavours to encompass issues of success and pleasure. Specifically, leadership is still not looked upon through the lens of the successful outcomes that it produces. For instance, leadership can be located in the successful program of producing organic innovation. It can create the necessary conditions where people in an educational institute are inspired by the leadership to dedicate their energies to the cause of innovation. Such a dedicated participation can lead to the organizational collective forever pondering on the creation of something new and this can lead to the emergence of virtuous cycles of positively reproducing the educational institute.

Leader authenticity has been proposed to be an important predictor of follower satisfaction and performance. Goal cascading and alignment enable us to understand the processes through which the influence of leaders can be felt across hierarchical levels. Ideas of transformational leadership are understood differently in different cultural contexts.

Leadership styles may significantly influence the psychological ownership of followers. It has been suggested that transformational leadership has a more positive impact on follower moral identity than transactional leadership.

Thus, one of the important aspects of leadership research has been to assess the impact of leaders on followers. Yet, in assessing this impact, a research gap appears to exist in terms of the successful impacts experienced by followers. In terms of this neglected area of research, it may be useful to understand how the aesthetics of material creation may follow from the inspiration provided by leaders. Through inspired leadership, every teacher may have an opportunity to become a partner in new creations which materially contribute to the educational institute. Such contributions can lead to the educational institute becoming a field where new material expressions are constantly gaining ground.

Inspired leadership may need to move away from measurement oriented paradigms and instead focus on crafting organizational accounts that must really matter to the collective. Leadership research must focus not only on the effective traits of leaders but also on what constitutes ineffective leadership.

## 2. Significance of Leadership

Transformational leadership has a more positive effect on contextual performance than on task performance. Rather than assuming contexts to be limiting conditions, they must be understood as a composite of the phenomena of leadership. Organizational aesthetics emerges in the relational processes that develop between leaders and followers, and such a view downplays any idea of individual heroics that might be considered as a part of leadership.

While there is some attention to aesthetics in leadership research, it has been largely explored where the contexts themselves are successful such as the music industry. It will be interesting to consider the successful dimensions of leadership in other managerial contexts in the business world. One important successful aspect of leadership might be the nurturing and sustenance of communities which creates a sense of belonging among organizational members. Communities create a basis where organizational members can share their thoughts and feelings with each other in a free way. The sense of community creates the foundations of being together and expressing opinions to each other frankly without having to look over each other's shoulders.

The process of others affirming somebody as a leader may begin with an individual recognizing her own leadership potential first. Women could also bring several important perspectives to leadership such as collectivism and lifelong relationships. Leadership research can also draw from post colonial philosophical thought and thus transcend stereotypical views of leadership. Subaltern expressions of leadership can often strongly emphasize the ideals of justice as one of its important anchors. Sometimes the excessive individuality of a leader can lead to rigid positions in which she is trapped.

While the successful outcomes of leadership are a neglected area in research, another important area that needs exploration is the processes through which leadership can create inspired champions in an educational institute. While much of modern management emphasizes the individual teacher and her traits, inspired champions may emerge in collective spaces rather than in individualized arenas. When leaders empower collectives, they create eco-systems from which teachers could draw to give their best. They could discuss work related issues with other members of the collective and attempt to craft innovative solutions. Thus, it is necessary to allow teachers to feel that they belong to a collective agency which engages with organizational issues and attempts to formulate solutions that lead to the progressive evolution of the educational institute.

Cohesion and conflict resolution can play important roles in enabling team leadership to be translated into effective performance. Leadership research has also focused on the methodological imperatives that can allow a contextual accessing of the phenomena of leadership.

A sense of shared goals and purposes can also lead to the emergence of a shared sense of leadership with voice playing an important role in the process. Empowering leadership has a positive effect on the creativity of teachers when it succeeds in creating a sense of psychological empowerment in them.

In the context of leadership, power distance orientation of individuals can have an impact on procedural justice perceptions. Leadership can create inspiration and derive greater respect for itself when it provides followers with a space for expressing dissent. Dissent ensures that alternative perspectives are always considered and a particular view is not rigidly held without adequate debate or discussion. Space for dissent also indicates the prevalence of a culture of organizational democracy where the views of organizational members are valued. Such a culture ensures that teachers feel a sense of dignity and respect and feel happy to share their views in the educational institute. The feeling of being valued also emerges from the fact their opinions are considered on merit and hierarchical considerations do not come in the way of neglecting their opinions.

Highly skilled teams which need to perform urgent and unpredictable tasks may rely on de-individualized systems of leadership in order to perform their tasks effectively. When Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) emphasize economic values, they are perceived to have autocratic leadership styles and when they emphasize stakeholder values, they are perceived to have visionary leadership styles.

Leadership may often involve the interaction of performance and maintenance orientations and the exercise of autocratic styles in order to achieve results may not always be effective. The process of the emergence of leadership in an organizational setting involves co-construction and depends on the evolving nature of social interactions. It is suggested that boards may focus on leadership development in the early stages of CEO tenure and then shift attention to managing opportunism in later stages of CEO tenure.

The focus of leadership research appears to be on bringing an alignment between the objectives of individuals and that of educational institutes. Yet this instrumental focus on leadership may not create inspirational and successful outcomes as the performance of instrumental roles may depend on managerial incentives and disincentives than on leadership dynamics.

### 3. Discussion

One of the ways in which inspirational objectives may be met is when leadership demonstrates its responsibilities towards marginal actors in the educational institute. The responsibility demonstrated towards the marginal can go a long way in ensuring that human beings and their concerns are important for the educational institute and that these concerns will not be sacrificed by it. This ensures that teachers in an educational institute are able to reach out to each other, express solidarity with each other and build a collective sense of belonging that is beneficial to all concerned.

This study contributes to theory by uncovering the variables which are important to understanding the successful fulfillments of leadership. It also contributes to leadership research by developing scales for variables which may have been neglected in the past. By identifying the ways in which variables are related to each other, it helps to identify the factors through which inspired champions can be created in an educational institute through the processes of leadership. It identifies the linkages between leadership and pluralism and thus helps underline the importance of democracy and dissent in educational institutes. It also helps in understanding the importance of the ideas of community collectives in the context of leadership.

Once the steps through which the successful outcomes of leadership are identified, it provides educational institutes with a conceptual map in order to realize these outcomes. It enables educational institutes to orient themselves in a pluralist ethics and prevent autocratic forms of governance from coming into existence. It helps educational institutes understand the importance of communities in inspiring people to perform beyond their capacities. Dignity and respect are also powerful motivators which help teachers to stretch beyond their reserves. The successful fulfillments of leadership and the process of creating inspired champions thus relies on schemes of integrity and commitment to basic human norms of decency.

Leadership practices explain 72.7% of the variance of organizational outcomes. When authenticity is removed from the model, the variance explained for organizational outcomes increases to 84.1%. This means that authenticity is either not consistent with other leadership practices or it does not contribute to some organizational outcomes in a reinforcing manner. Perhaps, authenticity and humility do not contribute to leadership practices and organizational outcomes in a reinforcing manner. Many times it may be important for leaders to be authentic in expressing their anger and disappointment with teachers working with them.

This may mean that leaders may sometimes have to give up their humility in order to be authentic. Authenticity leads to positive organizational outcomes in the context of shared

leadership where team authenticity and authenticity strength are of importance. Where the context of shared leadership may not be very important, authenticity may not reinforce organizational outcomes. Therefore, when authenticity is removed from the model, the variance explained for organizational outcomes increases. When authenticity alone is retained in the model as a determinant of organizational outcomes, and all other leadership practices are removed from the model, 50% of the variance of organizational outcomes is explained.

This underlies the importance of authenticity as a leadership practice. Authenticity leads to an increase in the trust among followers about their leaders and makes them feel strong positive emotions. When sense of belonging is removed as an organizational outcome and other organizational outcomes are retained, the variance explained for organizational outcomes reduces from 50% to 46.4%. This means that sense of belonging is an important organizational outcome related to authenticity as its capacity for explaining organizational outcomes declines when sense of belonging is removed as an organizational outcome. It is not surprising that authenticity contributes to an increase in sense of well-being as it has been found to be associated with meaningfulness of work and well-being of teachers.

When authenticity is included in the model only as a predictor of sense of belonging, 45.8% of the variance of sense of belonging is explained. This is almost equal to the variance of organizational outcomes that authenticity explains. Thus, one of the crucial organizational outcomes explained by authenticity is sense of belonging. Authenticity does not mean presenting a consistent, homogenous version of one's self to all constituencies. On the other hand, it involves revealing different aspects of one's inner core self to different people depending on the needs and expectations of constituencies involved.

When authenticity is included in the model only as a determinant of culture of excellence, 23.2% of the variance of culture of excellence is explained. This shows that authenticity predicts sense of belonging to a greater extent than it predicts culture of excellence. This means that authentic leadership can be used as a managerial strategy to increase organizational identification through the mechanism of sense of belonging more than using it as a managerial strategy for improving performance. This is in line with other results about authentic leadership in the Indian context where authentic leadership has been found to be a predictor of psychological ownership and work engagement. Consistency is an integral predictor of authenticity in leaders and this leads to the emergence of trust among followers.

Authentic leadership explains 52.7% of the variance of sense of freedom when it is entered as a predictor of sense of freedom alone. Thus, authenticity predicts sense of freedom to an even greater extent than it predicts sense of belonging. When a leader is thought to be authentic by the followers, they develop the courage to put forth their opinions freely and not be afraid of judgemental evaluations or unfair consequences. Authenticity is deeply linked with freedom as it means that organic thoughts and emotions should be expressed freely instead of being held back. It is this linkage between authentic

leadership and sense of freedom that leads to an improvement in performance, as teachers are able to give their best when they do not have to think twice about seeking approval for their actions taken in good faith.

#### 4. Conclusion

Authentic leadership practice explains 29.2% of the variance of sense of contribution when authentic leadership practice is entered as a determinant of sense of contribution alone. Authentic leadership is not related to evoking among teachers a sense of contribution as it has more to do with trust and integrity than with giving teachers a sense of their roles inside educational institutes. Authentic leadership in this sense is related to building intangible bonds with teachers rather than providing them with a cognitive assessment of their achievements inside the educational institute. Authentic leadership is related to emotional expressiveness of leaders

and evokes a sense of extra effort among followers. However, this is part of an implicit social exchange process rather than an explicit communication process through which followers may be able to identify their distinct contributions to the educational institute.

When authenticity alone is included in the model as a predictor of organizational outcomes with sense of belonging and culture of excellence as its indicators, then 69.1% of the variance of organizational outcomes is explained. This indicates that the explanatory potential of authenticity increases when both sense of belonging and culture of excellence are studied as simultaneous organizational outcomes. Thus, excellence is deeply linked with a sense of belonging, and when teachers feel that they belong to the educational institute, they also feel a sense of pride in ensuring that the educational institute functions with a sense of excellence.

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