

Servant Leadership as a New Leadership Concept In Organizations And Distinguishing Between Transformational and Servant Leadership

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Abstract: Servant leadership is an increasingly popular concept in the repertoire of leadership styles. The concepts of servant leadership appear to underlie most of current literature on leadership theory and management practice. When viewed in a historical and scientific context, servant leadership proves to be the viable and sustainable option for organizational longevity.

Servant leadership has been described as “a transformational approach to life and work” that takes “the transformation wrought in its followers to a new height”. The servant leader’s first priority is to serve others including customers, employees and the community involving shared decision-making, a holistic attitude toward work and community building. The servant leader believes in awareness, empathy and integrity and is most likely to engage in responsible reflection. He/She has been referred an active, empowering process in which the leader enables the followers to do their work and take responsibility for self-management. The result is as a synergy of shared vision, trust and responsibility that engenders a flexible organization and a deeply satisfying work life. The aim of this study is to describe the servant leadership that is an increasingly popular concept for organizations. On the other hand, this study indicates that the functional attributes of servant leadership such as communication, credibility, competence, stewardship, visibility, influence, persuasion, listening, encouragement, teaching and delegation. In the other words this article examines transformational leadership and servant leadership to determine what similarities and differences exist between the two leadership concepts.

Key Words: Leadership, Servant Leadership, The Characteristics of Servant Leadership, Transformational Leadership.

Introduction

The topic of leadership in the wider organizational context has been attracting attention for some time; indeed, its history is almost as long as the history of management. The leadership domain has recently focused on the so-called "new leadership paradigm" such as transformational leadership and servant leadership. According to Greenleaf, the servant-leader first has the desire to serve others, and then learns to lead as a servant. Laub (1999) defined a servant leader as one who emphasizes the good of followers over the self-interest of the leader. Bass (1990) specified that transformational leadership; “occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group”. The aim of this study is to describe the servant leadership that is an increasingly popular concept for organizations. In the other words this article examines transformational leadership and servant leadership to determine what similarities and differences exist between the two leadership concepts.

Servant Leadership

The paradoxical term, “servant-leadership”, which appears to touch an innate need in many of us, and which therefore harks back to the beginning of time, became popularized twenty-five years ago by Robert Greenleaf his books *Servant Leadership* (1977) and *Teacher as Servant* (1979). Greenleaf, who wished to stimulate thought and to develop a better, more caring society, compiled his observations on individuals in organisations who serve. According to Greenleaf, the servant-leader first has the desire to serve others, and then learns to lead as a servant. In Hamilton’s (2008) view, however, Greenleaf never formally defined servant-leadership; instead Greenleaf (1970) merely asked (Anderson, 2008, pp.4-5; Cunningham, 2004, p.2);

- Do those served grow as persons, do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?

- If one is a servant, one is always searching, listening, expecting that a better wheel for these times is in the making.

In his view, servant-leadership “begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then a conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead” (Anderson, 2008, pp.4-5).

The notion of servant leadership has received growing attention and recognition in recent years. Various researchers have espoused servant leadership as a valid theory of organizational leadership with great promise for theoretical and practical development (Washington, Sutton, Feild, 2005, p.701).

Laub (1999) defined a servant leader as one who emphasizes the good of followers over the self-interest of the leader. That is, according to Laub, servant leadership promotes development of people through (Washington, Sutton, Feild, 2005, pp.700-701);

- the sharing of power;
- community building;
- the practice of authenticity in leadership; and
- the provision of leadership for the good of followers, the total organization, and clients or customers of the organization.

The Characteristics of Servant Leadership

Spears (1995, 1998) listed, ten characteristics of a servant leader drawn from Greenleaf’s writings, and Contee-Borders’s (2003) case study confirmed these characteristics as being critical to servant leadership (Joseph, Winston, 2005, p.10; Speras, 2004, pp.2-3);

- **Listening:** Servant leaders clarify the will of a group by listening receptively to what is being said,
- **Empathy:** Servant leaders strive to understand and empathize with others,
- **Healing:** Servant leaders have the potential for healing self and others,
- **Awareness:** Servant leadership is strengthened by general awareness and especially self-awareness,
- **Persuasion:** Servant leaders rely upon persuasion, rather than positional authority, in making decisions within an organization,
- **Conceptualization:** Servant leaders seek to nurture their abilities to deram great dreams,
- **Foresight:** Servant leaders have the ability to foresee the likely outcome of a situation in the future,
- **Stewardship:** Servant leaders’ first and foremost cimmittment is to servet he needs of others,
- **Commitment to the growth of people:** Servant leaders are deeply committed to the personal, professional and spiritual growth of each and every individual within the institution and
- **Building Community:** Servant leaders seek to identify means of building community among those who work within a given institution.

According to Gersh, characteristics of servant leadership are empathy, stewardship/trust, building community, empowerment of those served, servant as leader (Gersh, 2006, p.14).

Whereas more emprical work is clearly needed to elucidate the model fully, leadership scholars do generally accept there are fundamental principles of servant leadership. Based on the reading of Greenleaf, Daft (1999) provided a summary of four underlying precepts associated with authentic servant leadership (Humphreys, 2005, pp.1414-1415);

- **Service before self:** Consistent with the definition, servant leaders place serving others before their own self-interests. The desire to facilitate the needs of others takes precedent over the desire for a formal leadership position. The servant leader insists on doing what is good and right, even in the absence of actual or potential gain in material possessions, status or prestige.

- **Listening as a means of affirmation:** A second hallmark of servant leadership is listening first as a way of affirming others. Instead of providing answers, the servant leader asks questions of anyone having important knowledge or insight into a problem or oppurtunity. By promoting participative decision making, the leader enhances the confidence and self-efficacy of others as “the primary mission of the servant leadership is to figure out the will of the group, to express that will, and then to further it...”

- **Creating trust:** Servant leaders create trust and inspire it in followers by demonstrating personal trustworthiness. They honestly share all information, positive and negative, to assure decisions will ultimately enhance the wellbeing of he group. Trust in the servant leader is augmented through freely trusting others and disseminating, not hoarding, power and incentives.

- **Nourishing followers to become whole:** Servant leaders desire for others to develop their full potential and become servant leaders as well. “Greenleaf believed the final goal of servanthood was to help others became servants themselves...”. Through openness and personal discussion of their trials and tribulations

and those of others, they share their humanity with followers. Unafraid of showing vulnerability, they use frank and open disclosure as a way to awaken the human spirit of those around them.

According to Patterson (2003), the servant leader leads and serves with (Dennis, Bocarnea, 2005, pp.602-604);

- **Agapao Love:** The corner of the servant leadership/follower relationship that Patterson describes is agapao love. Winston (2002) states that agapao means to love in a social or moral sense. According to Winston (2002), this love causes leaders to consider each person not simply as a means to an end but as a complete person: one with needs, wants, and desires. According to Winston, this love is alive and well today in organizations in which those who demonstrate it follow what Winston calls, not the Golden Rule, but the Platinum Rule (do unto others as they would want you to do unto them).

- **Humility:** Humility, according to Sandage and Wiens (2001), is the ability to keep one's accomplishments and talents in perspective. This means practicing self-acceptance, but it further includes the practices of true humility, which means not being self-focused on others. Swindoll (1981) argues that the humility of the servant is not to be equated with poor self-esteem, but rather that humility is in line with a healthy ego. In other words, humility does not mean having a low view of one's self or one's self worth; rather, it means viewing oneself as no better or worse than others do.

- **Altruism:** Kaplan (2000) states that altruism is helping others selflessly just for the sake of helping, which involves personal sacrifice, although there is no personal gain. Likewise, Eisenberg (1986), defines altruistic behavior as "voluntary behavior that is intended to benefit another and is not motivated by the expectation of external reward".

- **Vision:** Vision, according to Webster's Dictionary, is "the act or power of imagination; mode of seeing or conceiving; or, unusual discernment or foresight". Blanchard (200) defines vision as "a picture of the future that produces passion". Vision is necessary to good leadership. Hauser and House (2000) posit that the "development and communication of a vision is one explanation for the success of charismatic/transformational leaders and their effect on the performance".

- **Trust:** According to Hauser and House (200), trust is defined as "confidence in or reliance on another team member" in terms of their morality (e.g. honesty) and competence. According to Story (2002), trust is an essential characteristic of the servant leader. Servant leaders model truth in the way they coach, empower and persuade. This trust exists as a basic element for true leadership.

- **Service:** The act of serving includes a mission of responsibility to others. Leaders understand that service is the center of servant leadership. Leaders model their service to others in their behavior, attitudes, and values. According to Block (1993), service is everything. People are accountable to those they serve whether customers or subordinates. Greenleaf (1996) posits that for leaders to be of service to others, they must have a sense of responsibility.

- **Empowerment:** Empowerment is entrusting power to others, and for the servant leader it involves effective listening, making people feel significant, putting an emphasis on teamwork, and valuing of love and equality. Covey (2002) believes that the leader serves as a role model for empowering others and for valuing their differences. McGee-Cooper and Trammell (2002) argue that understanding basic assumptions and background information on important issues empowers people to discover deeper meaning in their jobs and to participate more fully in effective decision making. Bass (1990), posits that empowerment is power sharing with followers in planning and decision making.

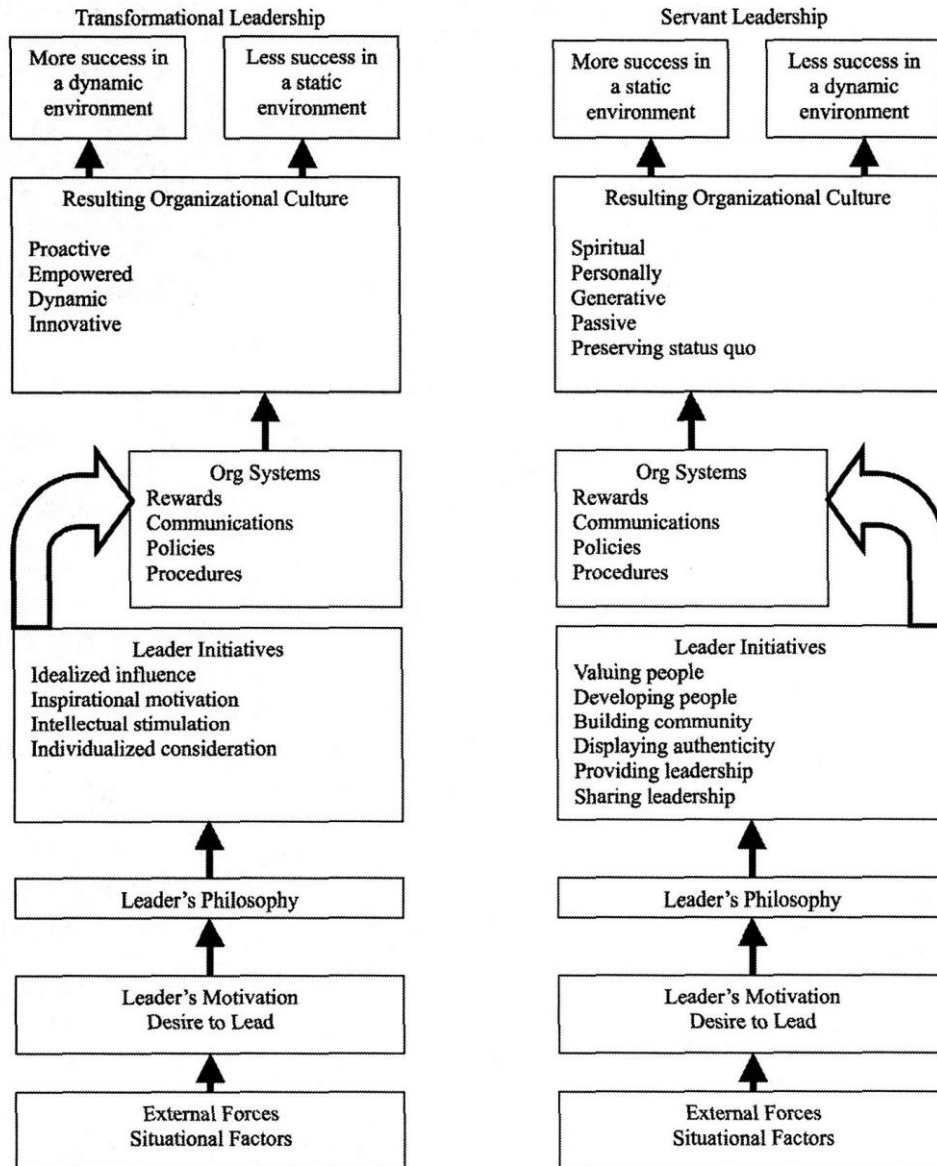
Transformational and Servant Leadership

Bass (1990) specified that transformational leadership; "occurs when leaders broaden and elevate the interests of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group" (Stone, Russell, Patterson, 2004, p.350).

This section compares transformational and servant leadership theories. To facilitate this analysis, a matrix of leadership components was created. Transformational leadership is defined as having four conceptually distinct elements: charismatic leadership/idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Servant leadership has six distinct components: valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity providing leadership, sharing leadership (Smith, Montagnano, Kuzmenko, 2004, p.82).

Smith et al. (2004) have proposed that transformational leadership would lead to an "empowerment dynamic culture", whereas, servant leader behavior would create a more "spiritual generative culture". Moreover, they suggest the context could determine which of these cultures, created by the leadership behaviors presented, might lead to greater organizational success. In other words, the context could determine the effectiveness of the leadership style offered (see Figure 1) (Smith, Montagnano, Kuzmenko, 2004, p.86; Humphreys, 2005, p.1417).

Parolini (2007) empirically investigated the assumptions in the literature about the distinctions between transformational and servant leaders including the moral, focus, motive and mission, development, and influence distinctions. Parolini found that transformational leaders were differentiated by their focus on the needs of the organization, inclination to lead first, allegiance toward the organization, and influence through conventional charismatic approaches as well as control. The study also identified servant leaders as differentiated by their focus on the needs of the individual, inclination to serve first, allegiance toward the individual, and influence through unconventional service as well as through offering freedom or autonomy. Through the data collection and analysis process, a high presence of transformational and servant leadership was found in organizational life (Parolini, Patterson, Winston, 2008, pp.288, 289).



Source: Smith *et al.* (2004)

Figure 1: Transformational and Servant Leadership

Conclusion

The notion of servant leadership has received growing attention and recognition in recent years. Various researchers have espoused servant leadership as a valid theory of organizational leadership with great promise for theoretical and practical development. According to Laub, servant leadership promotes development of people through the sharing of power, community building, the practice of authenticity in leadership, and the provision of leadership for the good of followers, the total organization, and clients or customers of the organization. Spears (1995, 1998) listed, ten characteristics of a servant leader drawn from Greenleaf's writings,

and Contee-Borders's (2003) case study confirmed these characteristics as being critical to servant leadership; listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, building community.

Finally, it have been compared that differences which exist between transformational and servant leadership in this study. Transformational leadership is defined as having four conceptually distinct elements; charismatic leadership/idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration whereas servant leadership has six distinct components; valuing people, developing people, building community, displaying authenticity providing leadership, sharing leadership.

As a result, while transformational leadership has been well researched and has become popular in practice, servant leadership theory needs further support. Nonetheless, servant leadership offers great opportunities for leaders.

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