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Emerging Practices in Leadership Development

An Introduction

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The problem and the solution. This article reviews recent novel contributions to leadership development theory and practice. It provides definitions and a brief overview of leadership and leadership development, and a summary of a number of seminal and contemporary leadership theories that serve as a foundation for leadership development practice today. In addition, the article discusses emerging new directions and approaches in leadership development. Last, this introduction provides a brief overview of each of the articles in this issue of emerging practices in leadership development.

Keywords: *leadership development; leadership; leadership theories*

The purpose of the Emerging Practices in Leadership Development issue of the *Advances in Developing Human Resources (ADHR)* is to provide leadership development scholars and practitioners with new ideas for research and leadership development practice. In this introductory article we provide, first, an overview of novel leadership development practices that are being researched and implemented by scholars and practitioners. We discuss not only practices, covered in subsequent articles of this issue, but also a number of popular theories and novel practices, which were not covered by the issue contributors. In addition, we highlight recent theoretical debates and/or new

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empirical evidence related to more established leadership development on emerging practices.

To date, there seems to be no shortage of literature on leadership theory and practice. Safferstone (2005) stated, "The need for leaders and leadership is a perennial subject that traces its beginnings to the Old Testament, ancient China, and 16th-century Italy" (p. 959). Numerous contemporary authors have crystallized definitions of leadership, identified the need for leadership in modern organizations, documented the positive impact of effective leadership on organizational performance, and proposed leadership models and leadership development strategies (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1990; de Vries, 2003; London, 2002; Safferstone, 2005; Yukl, 2002).

From a definition standpoint, leadership has been described in many different ways. To that end, Northouse (2007) suggested that several different components can be identified as central to the phenomenon of leadership: (a) Leadership is a process, (b) it involves influence, (c) it occurs within a group context, and (d) it involves goal attainment. Summarizing his review of several dozen definitions, Northouse (2007) defined leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 3). Bennis (1989) explained that leaders tend to share some, if not all, of the following three ingredients: They are establishing a guiding vision, have passion, and act with integrity.

Given the importance of leadership in contemporary organizations, it is not surprising that leadership development gets the largest percentage allocation from training and development budgets of most organizations (Rivera & Paradise, 2006), and is among the most popular areas of human resource development (HRD) practice and academic research. Comprehensive overviews of leadership development practices were provided by Cacioppe (1998), Conger (1992), Conger and Benjamin (1999), Day (2001), Fulmer, Gibbs, and Goldsmith (2000), Giber, Carter, and Goldsmith (2000), Hernez-Broome and Hughes (2004), and McCauley and Van Velsor (2005). In addition, a number of previous issues of *ADHR* and individual articles in this journal were devoted to leadership development. Thus, a special issue of *ADHR*, edited by Holton and Lynham (2000), provided a detailed account of research, related to performance-based leadership development model; Naquin and Holton (2006) discussed leadership and managerial competency models; and Trehan (2007) provided a useful overview of psychodynamic and critical perspectives on leadership development.

Discussing definitions of leadership development, Allen, Conklin, and Hart (this issue), made an important distinction between *leader development* and *leadership development*. They cited McCauley and Van Velsor's (2005), who defined leader development as mostly directed at expanding an individual leader's capacity, and Day (2001), who talked about leader development as a process, oriented towards developing individual leaders' abilities associated with their formal roles. Allen et al. further defined leadership development as a process of expanding an organization's capacity to generate leadership

potential within the organization to achieve organizational goals. Therefore, Allen et al. and Day (2001) suggested that leader development is individual-level development, whereas leadership development involves interaction between individual leaders and the social-cultural environment in which they function. Last, Olivares, Peterson, and Hess (2007) argued, "Although individual-based leader development is necessary for leadership, it is not sufficient. Leadership requires that individual development is integrated and understood in the context of others, social systems, and organizational strategies, missions, and goals" (p. 79).

A comprehensive overview of all major theories of leadership and of different approaches to leadership development is beyond the scope of this brief review article. However, we would like to refer the readers to several publications, providing useful overviews of the evolution of major theories of leadership. Thus, Chemers (2000) discussed a range of the most influential theories, grouping them under several categories, including the "great man" theories, trait theories, behavioral theories, participative leadership theories, situational and contingency theories, and transactional/transformational theories. Northouse (2007) not only reviewed many of the same theories, but also added the discussion of the path-goal theory, team leadership, and psychodynamic leadership theories. Finally, Sudbrack and Trombley (2007) took an innovative approach and introduced the readers to a selection of the theories mentioned here, using an example of a popular TV show.

In this article, we will highlight several theories, which often form a foundation of leadership development practices in today's organizations. Specifically, we will focus on such theories and models of leadership as leader-member exchange (LMX) theory, situational leadership, transformational leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, and complexity theory. Our choice reflects our impressions of what theories and models are most often used in leadership development practice or have potential to inform leadership development practice. These impressions are based on our own practical work in industry and discussions with industry practitioners and thus our list is likely to be incomplete. We realize there are numerous other theories and models that the readers may suggest for inclusion in this review. In fact, we could have discussed such popular industry frameworks, as Kouzes and Posner's (2007) leadership model, Collins' (2001) insights on level-five leadership, or Pearce and Conger (2003), and Pearce and Sims (2002) work on shared leadership. However, because we could not find ample scholarly reports on evaluation of these frameworks, we opted not to use them in this article.

LMX theory or vertical dyad linkage (VDL) theory evolved from the examination of relationships between leader and followers. According to Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), LMX theory is a relationship-based theory versus leader-based or follower-based theory. The theory contends that leaders develop separate "in-group" and "out-group" relationships with direct reports (Dansereau,

Graen, & Haga, 1975). Moreover, using LMX theory, a leader's relationship with their direct reports is viewed as a series of dyadic links. Direct reports become part of the in-group or the out-group based on how well they work with the leader and how well the leader works with them (Northouse, 2007). Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) also expressed that the use of LMX in research has been gaining momentum in previous years. The recent literature indicates that LMX has evolved from an examination of relationships between followers and leader to a study of organization outcomes, leadership making (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), to more recent studies on the linkage between HRD and LMX (Kang & Stewart, 2007), integrating LMX with a group engagement model (Sparrowe, Soetjijto, & Kraimer, 2006), an examination of the multidimensionality of supervisor and subordinate perceptions of LMX (Greguras & Ford, 2006), and perceived LMX differentiation on employee reactions (Hooper & Martin, 2008).

Although there is plenty of research-based evidence of the strength of the LMX model, the reports on its actual practical applications are scarce. We are not certain why LMX theory is not more embedded in practice or practical literature. We see promise in this area and encourage and challenge other researchers and practitioners to make a stronger connection to practice.

Situational leadership, which falls under the umbrella of contingency theory of leadership (Fiedler, 1967), was developed by Hershey and Blanchard (1969), and was based on Reddin's (1967) 3-D management style theory. Hershey and Blanchard postulated that there is no one best way to influence people. The premise of their theory is that different situations call for different types of leader action. They further stressed that leadership is comprised of both a supportive and directive dimension and each dimension is applied based on a follower's competence and commitment to a given task. According to Northouse (2007), research on this approach is limited and the theoretical base is not well developed. Nevertheless, Hersey and Blanchard (as cited in Northouse, 2007) suggested that this approach has been used (and in many cases still is being used) by approximately 400 of the Fortune 500 companies. We believe organizations use this approach because it has been marketed extensively through a network of HRD consulting firms, offering a variety of two-day participant and train-the-trainer workshops. In addition, the popularity of the approach can be attributed to its applicability across a variety of settings, and it is relatively easy to understand and apply.

Another influential contemporary theory is transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Burns, 1978; Tichy & Devanna, 1997). This theory postulates that there are three types of leadership behavior: transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and *laissez-faire* leadership. According to Bass and Avolio (1994), transactional leadership is the most prevalent managerial behavior, and it focuses on the exchanges of favors that occur between leaders and followers, and on reward or punishment for good or poor performance.

Laissez-faire is a passive form of managing people, basically an attempt to leave people to their own devices and is, thus, considered to be “impoverished” leadership. By contrast, transformational leadership is characterized by the process whereby a leader engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation, commitment, and morality in both the leader and the follower. Under transactional leadership, followers’ motivation to respond to the leader is driven by the leader’s ability to give and take, to provide rewards and/or corrective measures in response to action or inaction. On the other hand, transformational leadership is characterized by having a relationship where followers are compelled to respond to a leader’s influence because the leader helps the follower see deeper purpose in their work, treats them as unique and valuable human beings, and instills in them belief in what the leader is trying to achieve. There is a significant body of research literature that documents validity of this framework (Bass, 1998), and there is also significant evidence that this model is being successfully used in leadership training and development in industry (Avolio, 2005; Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Servant Leadership (Block, 1993; Greenleaf, 2002; Spears, Lawence, & Blanchard, 2001) is another fairly popular contemporary theory of leadership and its premise is based on the distribution of power to followers. Moreover, when leaders subscribe to stewardship or servant leadership principles, they work to serve their followers for the purpose of achieving organization objectives. In essence, the leader sees themselves as servants to those they lead for the purpose of increasing the capacity of others to do their work. To that end, Avolio and Gardner (2005) suggested that servant leadership theory has been largely based on popular literature and not well supported by empirical research. Although it has not been well researched, it is being promoted and integrated into leadership development programs in for-profit and not-for-profit institutions. It is our impression that this leadership theory has some momentum in faith-based leadership programs. The practice of this approach appears to stem from workshops offered by internal HRD professionals, consulting organizations, and not-for-profit institutions devoted to servant leadership principles.

Among the latest developments in leadership theory and practice are a growing interest in authentic leadership. Both academic and practitioner-oriented publications on this subject have increased substantially over the past 5 years (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005; George & Sims, 2007). Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson (2008) indicated that theory of authentic leadership is still in the process of emergence, and it is being shaped by scholars, working from three convergent perspectives: leadership, ethics, and positive psychology and organizational scholarship (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Luthans, 2002). Although as a theoretical construct *authentic leadership* is still in the process of validation, practical leadership development applications of this idea date back to at least early 1990s, when a number of organizational psychologists and consultants

have created highly successful leadership coaching and training programs, at the core of which was the idea of authenticity and self-knowledge. Thus, Kevin Cashman (1998) discussed his leadership coaching and training approach in a popular book *Leadership From Inside Out*. Cashman (1998) defined leadership as “an authentic self-expression that creates value” (p. 31) and described a 7-step program, aimed at increasing a leader’s capacity for personal growth and transformation, and utilizing self-reflection, journaling, and one-on-one sessions with experienced coaches.

Taken in its simplest form, authenticity can be construed as being true to oneself and one’s values (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005). Luthans and Avolio (2003) defined authentic leadership “as a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development” (p. 243). Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa (2005) and Avolio and Gardner (2005) argued that authentic leadership includes leader’s self-awareness, self-regulation, as well as moral perspective, and high ethical standards that guide decision making and behavior. The latest contribution to the development of the authentic leadership theory was recently made by Walumbwa et al. (2008), who conducted a study in several countries to validate a multidimensional model of the authentic leadership construct, including such factors as leader self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing.

A promising new theoretical perspective on leaders and leadership development is offered by recent applications of the complexity theory. The complexity perspective shifts the focus of research and practice of leadership and leadership development from the emphasis on hierarchical leader–follower relationships and leader’s role in developing organizational values and strategic directions, to leadership as part of a dynamic and evolving pattern of behaviors and complex interactions among various organizational players. The complexity theorists are interested in understanding how the interactions of people in organizations lead to the creation of patterns of behavior, which in turn shape organizational strategies, power structures, and networks of relationships. The main tenets of the complexity theory, most applicable to the study of leadership in organizations, are nonlinear dynamics, emergent self-organization, and adaptability (Plowman et al., 2007; Schneider & Somers, 2006).

Schneider and Somers (2006) argued that, if organizations are viewed as self-organizing systems, the role of leadership should also be reconceptualized. Marion and Uhl-Bien (2001) suggested that in complex systems leaders are not controlling the future, but are enabling the development of conditions, which lead to desirable future states. Stacey and Griffin (2005) further argued that from the complex adaptive systems perspective, the role of leaders emerges in social interactions and is not something given ones and for all. Plowman et al. (2007) provided empirical support for this idea, demonstrating that the main

role of leaders in complex adaptive systems, as studied by them, was to disrupt existing patterns of behavior, to promote innovation through encouraging non-linear interactions and novel ideas, and to interpret change for others, instead of trying to create change. This novel view of leader's role in organizations suggests that leadership development should also be reconceptualized. Thus, instead of trying to develop leaders' strategy-making abilities, we need to focus more on developing their ability to recognize complex dynamics and emergent patterns within their organizations and to articulate emerging themes (Stacey & Griffin, 2005). Furthermore, leadership development should be concerned with developing leader's capacity for greater imaginativeness, for acting within a wider range of possibilities, for taking risks, and for being able to "live with the anxiety of not knowing and not being in control" (p. 11).

In recent years, the field of leadership development has seen the emergence of a variety of new methods and techniques, which are not yet widely known to the HRD audience beyond the narrow circle of immediate implementers. Thus, a recent *ADHR* issue, edited by Callahan and Whitener (2007), addressed the use of popular culture and media in leadership development work.

To further fill the knowledge and awareness gap between actual practices in the field, and awareness of the innovative practices in academic and wider practitioner circles, several articles in this issue are exposing readers of *ADHR* to new promising leadership development methods or approaches which are being successfully applied in leadership development practice, but have not yet received sufficient attention in academic publications.

Thus, an article by Steven V. Manderscheid exposes the readers to a new approach, which has already gained significant following among leadership development experts, but has not yet been researched or discussed at length in HRD publications—*leader assimilations*. Leader assimilation is an early leadership development intervention intended to help new leaders adapt to their work teams. A leader assimilation is an intervention typically facilitated by an internal or external leadership development practitioner. During an assimilation, a facilitator meets with the leader's team shortly after the leader starts his or her new role (typically 90 days) and solicits general feedback about the leader (see Steven V. Manderscheid's article in this issue for specific questions). The facilitator then distills the feedback and shares it with the leader in a one-on-one coaching situation. After the coaching session, the facilitator helps the leader facilitate an open dialogue with their team using the team's feedback as a catalyst for dialogue. Outside of providing coaching for leaders entering into a new role, formal early leadership development interventions are sparse. To that end, leader assimilations are promising interventions for future research and early leadership development.

The article by Craig Polsfuss and Alexandre Ardichvili introduces readers to applications in leadership development of a new psychoeducational method, called *three principles psychology*. Although the effectiveness of this approach in various counseling situations (including chemical dependency rehabilitation, family counseling, and community development) has been documented

in numerous research publications, publications that describe the use of this method in leadership development are still scarce. Based on results of a qualitative study of three principles psychology practitioners and their clients—business executives, the article discusses practical applications, advantages, and potential drawbacks of this approach as a method of individual leader development. The article demonstrates that this approach represents a major paradigm shift in the application of psychological theories in leadership development and coaching. Specifically, it demonstrates how realization of fundamental principles of mental well-being helps leaders go beyond understanding their motives, values, and aspirations to a working understanding of their own psychological functioning and thus ability to better regulate their leadership behavior and relationships with followers.

In addition to introducing the readers to novel and innovative approaches to leadership development, our goal for this issue was to discuss more well-known and established approaches and provide new perspectives on these approaches. Five articles in this issue serve this goal by discussing approaches, which have been around for long time and have an established track record of successful implementation in leadership development. However, the authors of these articles provide fascinating new perspectives on recent innovative applications of these approaches.

“Individual Leader Development: An Appreciative Inquiry Approach” by Scott Allen, Thomas Conklin, and Rama Hart, discusses an application of a well-known and widely practiced method of organization development, appreciative inquiry (AI), to individual leader development. The authors provide a brief overview of principles of AI, followed by a more detailed discussion of potential uses of AI in leader development. One of the main contributions of this article is an exploration of how individual frames of reference are transformed through sources of learning and a description of how AI can be particularly useful for this purpose. The authors assert that AI increases leaders’ capacity to regenerate their roles through inner work and working inside-out—starting with understanding self and the impact of self on others.

Sharon Gibson focuses on developmental relationships of women leaders. This article takes a unique approach in that it combines two elements—leadership development and career development—in its exploration of the dimensions of developmental relationships for women leaders in career transition. Based on the results of her phenomenological study, the author proposes that a leader’s development continues throughout their career transition and that developmental relationships are key to the leader’s transition into a new leadership role. Thus, the article expands the traditional view of leadership development (which is often organizationally bound) to include development that occurs for leaders when they are between leadership roles (e.g., during career transition).

Sarah Hazlett, in her article, *Using Multisource Feedback to Develop Leaders*, reminds us that multisource feedback is one of the most popular among HRD professional tools for leadership and management development

and assessment. However, she argues, we often take the effectiveness of this method for granted and do not reflect on specific advantages and shortcomings of multisource feedback as a method for developing leaders. Based on a comprehensive review of the literature, the author points out that meta analysis of research studies indicates only a modest contribution of multisource feedback initiatives to the success of leadership development. Furthermore, she suggests that it is unrealistic for leadership development practitioners to expect multisource feedback to be a universally effective tool that can foster development for all leaders and that practitioners need to strive to put in place processes that will provide, in addition to feedback itself, a number of often-overlooked critical elements of multisource feedback systems.

The article on succession planning, by Davis and Barnett, draws on their extensive experience to highlight best practices, discusses how succession systems get detached from organizations, and explains why current succession planning activities do not yield desired results for many organizations. Davis and Barnett provide new information about how to look at leadership at the top and how to use that information to build stronger succession planning systems. To do this, they explain how competencies alone may not be sufficient for assessing and aligning talent. Moreover, they build on role theory to describe the primary enterprise leader roles and how these can be used to improve succession planning practices.

Finally, an article by Rama Hart and Mary Fambrough addresses another well-known theory—the emotional intelligence (EI), and uses the critical management theory lens to discuss recent attempts to implement emotional intelligence in leadership development and to challenge our assumptions about the effectiveness of this approach. The authors attempt to answer several very important questions for HRD professionals, including the following: Is there one accepted model of emotional intelligence? Is there a definitive association between emotional intelligence and leadership effectiveness? What issues are raised by generalizing emotional intelligence abilities and competencies across cultures or in multicultural contexts? How might emotional-intelligence training enable leaders to use power more skillfully to achieve personal or organizational ends?

In summary, we believe that this issue of *ADHR* will provide scholars and practitioners with new ways of looking at leadership development research and practice. We anticipate that practitioners will discover new and useful insights and methods in leadership development that will help them be more effective when working to develop leadership talent in organizations. From a research perspective, we hope that the findings presented in this issue will further research in many of the areas discussed in the issue. Moreover, we are hopeful that by presenting novel concepts in the area of leadership development, we may spark some additional “never-seen-before” practices in leadership development.

To move the field of leadership development forward, scholars and practitioners need to continue to push the envelope on new ways to develop leadership talent. We as HRD professionals should be looking for new and

innovative ways to develop current and future leaders. Sometimes these methods are right in front of us and need to be acknowledged, researched, and or challenged; at other times, these methods may be embedded in other disciplines. In any case, HRD professionals will best serve the community of scholars and the “world of work” by challenging current practices in leadership development and by looking for new approaches that are not always aligned with what we perceive to be “common” to leadership development practice. Lastly, we and the authors in this issue invite you to challenge our thinking and build on our work. We hope to partner with you and/or see your contributions to new leadership development research and practice in the future.

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