

Practicability of Born or Made Leadership Mentoring Ingredients in Enhancing Educational Institutions Management

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Abstract

Leadership is the process of influencing, guiding, and inspiring individuals or a group of people toward a common goal, vision, or objective. There are varying arguments from different scholars and experts on whether leaders are born or made leaders. Some supporters of the born argument suggest that certain individuals possess inherent qualities or traits that make them more predisposed to be effective leaders and this is according to the trait theory of leadership. On the other side of the debate, supporters of the made leaders argument argue that leadership skills and abilities can be developed and honed through education, training, and experience and the idea is highly supported by modern leadership theories. However, leadership is situational, and different situations may require different leadership styles hence needs a combination of both inherent traits and learned skills.

Keywords: Leadership Styles, Educational Institutions, Mentoring Ingredients, Management

1. Introduction

Leadership is a complex and multi-faced perception since several studies have been made by many scholars on the topic for many decades. For instance, Heiss (2023) defines leadership as the ability to guide and influence others toward a shared goal or vision. “Leadership is the influencing process of leaders and followers to achieve organizational objectives through change” (Oberer & Erkollar, 2018). Leadership involves five key elements which are; influence, organizational vision, changes, leader-follower relationship, and people. This indicates that leadership practices can’t be effective if any of the aforementioned elements is neglected, as no leadership without people, no leadership without vision, or a leader-follower relationship. Leadership in educational management plays a crucial role in setting a vision, making strategic decisions, shaping organizational culture, supporting teaching and learning, engaging stakeholders, managing resources effectively, and driving continuous improvement and accountability (Bush, 2020).

Consequently, effective leadership is essential for the overall success and sustainability of educational institutions. Who is a leader anyway? A leader is an individual who possesses the ability to influence, guide, and inspire others to work together toward a common goal or vision (Oberer & Erkollar, 2018). This implies that leadership involves setting a direction and vision, inspiring others, and fostering collaboration to navigate challenges and drive progress. Leaders can be found in various settings, including businesses, organizations, communities, and even within families. Leadership involves not only providing direction but also exhibiting qualities such as integrity, empathy, decisiveness, and effective communication. Accordingly, an organization's success is directly proportional to the quality of its leadership (Soeari et al., 2023). This implies that effective leadership often requires adaptability and the capacity to understand and meet the needs of followers. There are varying arguments from different scholars and experts on whether leaders are born that way or made leaders. This paper aims at exploring an overview of the arguments from both sides on whether leaders are born that way or made to be leaders in different ways.

2. Literature Review

Leadership in educational management is essential for providing direction, fostering innovation, creating a positive culture, supporting teaching and learning, ensuring accountability, building relationships, managing resources effectively, and navigating challenges and change (Lumban, 2023). Effective leadership contributes to the overall success, sustainability, and impact to educational institutions in achieving their mission and goals. The concept of leadership has been around for a long time, probably as long as humans have organized themselves into groups. There are different ideas and debates on whether leaders are born that way or are the result of learning and interaction with the environment.

Classical Leadership Arguments

Leaders Are Born. Some scholars have tried to put forward several theories insisting that leaders are born with special characteristics that make them leaders. Supporters of the born argument include; the Great Man Theory and Trait theory. In general, these theories suggest that certain individuals possess inherent qualities or traits that make them more predisposed to be effective leaders. These traits might include charisma, confidence, intelligence, and a natural ability to influence and inspire others (Peters, 2023). The theories argued that these traits are part of an individual's genetic makeup and are difficult to develop through training or education therefore genetic factors can influence leadership emergence (Aliekperova & Aliekperov, 2023). This implies that certain fundamental traits such as courage, confidentiality and power of influence are deeply rooted in an individual's genetic makeup and may be less amendable to significant change through external influences.

Great Man Theory of Leadership. The theory was developed and published by Thomas Carlyle, Scottish philosopher, historian, and essayist, his book "On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History" in 1841. The theory was further modified by Herbert Spencer (1873), who introduced the idea of social evolution and the role of exceptional individuals in driving progress (Acton, 2024). According to his perspective, individuals are born with the specific qualities such as intelligence, charisma, courage, and decisiveness, which distinguish them as leaders (Peters, 2023). In a real sense, intelligence, charisma, courage, and decisiveness are some of the characteristics of leaders. Moreover, these features are highly needed in enhancing educational management.

Despite a good contribution of the Great Man Theory to the understanding leadership it is yet challenged by contemporary leadership theories that tend to adopt a more nuanced perspective that acknowledges the interaction between individual traits, situational factors, and the dynamic nature of leadership (Onuecheta, 2020). Moreover, the pointed characteristics are not the only determinants of successful educational leadership. Skills like effective communication, team building, decision making, and planning can develop as an individual interacts with the environments.

Trait Theory of Leadership. This is the earliest theories of leadership that focuses on identifying specific traits or qualities that are believed to be associated with effective leaders. The theory was developed by Thomas Carlyle in the 1800s. Although not strictly a theorist of the trait theory of leadership, Carlyle's work in the mid-19th century laid the groundwork for the idea those great leaders possess inherent qualities. Ralph Stogdill also contributed significantly to the trait theory of leadership in the mid-20th century through his research and publications, including his influential book "Leadership and Group Performance" in 1950. The theory was further developed by James Kouzes and Barry Posner through their book "The Leadership Challenge," published in 1987. which outlines five key practices of exemplary leadership. While not solely

focused on traits, their work incorporates aspects of trait theory, highlighting qualities like honesty, competence, and inspiration.

Moreover, Warren Bennis through his book "On Becoming a Leader," published in 1989 added more contribution to the theory by emphasizing the importance of traits like vision, integrity, and emotional intelligence in effective leadership. This theory suggests that some people possess inherent traits or characteristics that make them natural leaders (Northouse, 2021). While the trait theory has been largely criticized for oversimplifying leadership, it has contributed to our understanding of leadership by highlighting important qualities that may be relevant to leadership effectiveness. In educational institutions, trait theory principles can be used to identify and select individuals with the appropriate leadership traits for administrative and managerial roles within the institution (Miles, 2022).

Additionally, the theory informs leadership development programs for educators and administrators (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). These programs can focus on enhancing and refining specific leadership traits identified as important for effective educational management, such as decision-making abilities, interpersonal skills, and strategic thinking (Bush, 2020). The theory also provides a framework for evaluating the performance of educational leaders based on the presence or absence of key leadership traits (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). Performance appraisal systems can be designed to assess leaders against criteria derived from trait theory, providing feedback for professional growth and identifying areas for improvement.

Besides, educational institutions can use trait theory to identify potential future leaders among current staff members (Deshwal & Ali, 2020). By assessing individuals for leadership traits and providing them with opportunities for mentorship, training, and development, schools can groom a pipeline of capable leaders to fill key roles as vacancies arise (Northouse, 2021). The theory can inform decisions about team composition within educational management structures, by assembling teams with diverse sets of complementary traits, such as problem-solving skills, creativity, and task orientation, educational leaders can enhance team effectiveness and productivity. In a nutshell, it is important to note that both the Great Man and Trait Theory of Leadership are just one perspective on leadership and have been largely surpassed by more comprehensive and dynamic theories, such as transformational, situational, and contingency theories.

Leaders Are Made. On the other side of the debate, supporters of the "made leaders" argument argue that leadership skills and abilities can be developed and honed through education, training, and experience. They believe that anyone can become a leader with the right opportunities and efforts (Saltik, 2023). Hence the "leadership development" perspective emphasizes the importance of mentorship, education, and practice in shaping leaders.

Leadership development perspective supporting the idea that leaders are made. Such perspectives are often grounded in the belief that leadership is a skill that can be learned, honed, and developed over time. These perspectives recognize the role of various developmental factors in helping individuals become effective leaders (Roe, 2020). The following are key aspects of this approach:

Mentorship is a crucial aspect of leadership development. It involves a more experienced and knowledgeable individual (the mentor) providing guidance, support, and feedback to a less experienced person (the mentee) (Kouzes & Posner, 2023). Mentors can offer insights, share their experiences, and provide a safe space for leaders-in-training to learn and grow. This one-on-one relationship can be instrumental in developing leadership skills.

Leadership education encompasses formal training, workshops, courses, and academic programs that teach leadership principles, theories, and practical skills (Roe, 2020). Leadership education helps individuals gain a deeper understanding of leadership concepts, ethical considerations, communication, and problem-solving and equips them with the knowledge needed to excel in leadership roles.

Feedback and Self-Reflection. Effective leadership development involves a feedback loop where individuals receive constructive feedback on their leadership behaviors and performance (Kouzes & Posner, 2023). Self-reflection is also crucial. Leaders should take time to assess their actions, decisions, and interactions with others to identify areas for improvement and personal growth.

Leadership development is an ongoing process. Effective leaders never stop learning; they seek opportunities for growth and self-improvement throughout their careers (Kouzes & Posner, 2023). This means that, staying up-to-date with the latest leadership theories, best practices, and emerging trends is essential for maintaining and enhancing leadership skills.

Peer Learning and Networking. Interacting with peers, colleagues, and other leaders can be a valuable source of learning. Peer learning and networking opportunities provide a platform for sharing experiences, best practices, and insights. Collaborating with others can offer different perspectives and solutions to leadership challenges (Kouzes & Posner, 2023). The Leadership Challenge, a well-known leadership development framework developed by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, emphasizes that leadership is a set of learnable skills and behaviors.

Nevertheless, leadership development perspectives that prioritize mentorship, education, and practice acknowledge that leadership is a dynamic and learnable skill (Roe, 2020). These approaches recognize that leaders can benefit from the wisdom of mentors, formal education, hands-on experience, and continuous self-improvement (Peters, 2023). Combining these elements helps individuals grow and shape their leadership capabilities over time.

These perspectives align with modern leadership theories that focus on skills, behaviors, and situational aspects of leadership. The "trait theory" of leadership has largely been replaced by theories like transformational, transactional, authentic, laissez-faire, situational, leader-member Exchange, and servant leadership, which emphasize the importance of learned skills and adaptability (Roe, 2020).

Modern Leadership Arguments

Behavioral Theory of Leadership. The Behavioral Theory of Leadership, also known as the Style Theory of Leadership, emerged in 1964 as a response to earlier trait theories that suggested certain inherent traits made individuals better suited for leadership roles. Behavioral theorists shifted the focus from inherent characteristics to observable behaviors that effective leaders exhibit (Nawaz & Khan 2016). Rather than emphasizing the innate qualities of leaders, the Behavioral Theory suggests that leadership is largely a result of learned behaviors and actions. This theory suggests that anyone can become a leader by adopting and practicing the appropriate behaviors.

The Theory suggests that effective leaders can exhibit a combination of task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviors, depending on the context and needs of their team and organization. Successful leadership often involves striking a balance between achieving tasks and maintaining positive relationships with followers (Lussier & Achua, 2022). This theory has contributed significantly to leadership development by highlighting the importance of understanding and developing specific behaviors and skills that contribute to effective leadership (Steffens, et al., 2021). It has also paved the way for leadership training programs aimed at helping individuals cultivate the necessary behaviors to become successful leaders, regardless of their innate traits (Lussier & Achua, 2022).

Leader-Member Exchange Theory. The Leader-Member Exchange theory was pioneered by Fred Dansereau, George Graen, and William J. Haga in 1975. The theory focuses on the relationships that leaders develop with each of their followers individually (Atkinson et al., 2021). It suggests that leaders often form in-group and out-group relationships with different team members, affecting the quality and effectiveness of their leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2023). High-quality leader-member exchange relationships result in greater trust, communication, and collaboration between leaders and followers. These increase leaders' productivity and efficiency in educational management.

Transactional Leadership Theory. Transactional Leadership Theory was initially proposed by Bernard M. Bass in 1981 and was based on earlier work by James MacGregor Burns in the 1970s. Burns introduced the concepts of transactional and transformational leadership in his book "Leadership" published in 1978 (Northouse, 2021). Bass expanded on Burns' ideas and developed the Transactional Leadership Theory further in his book "Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations" published in 1985. The theory focuses on the exchange of rewards and

punishments to motivate and manage followers (Bakker et al., 2023). Leaders set clear expectations and use contingent rewards and corrective actions to maintain performance (Northouse, 2021). While transactional leadership is more structured and task-oriented, it can be effective in situations where clear guidelines and control are essential.

Servant Leadership. Servant leadership theory was pioneered by Robert K. Greenleaf in the 1970s. Greenleaf introduced the idea of servant leadership in his essay "The Servant as Leader," which was first published in 1970. In this essay and subsequent writings, Greenleaf proposed a leadership philosophy where leaders prioritize serving the needs of others, empowering and developing their followers, and fostering a sense of community and collaboration within organizations (Peters, 2023). The theory emphasizes the leader's role as a servant to their team and organization (Ytterstad & Olaisen, 2023). These leaders prioritize the well-being and development of their followers, aiming to serve their needs and help them grow (Northouse, 2021). Servant leaders are known for their humility, empathy, and commitment to ethical and moral behavior. They create a supportive and empowering work environment. Applying servant leadership principles in education settings, leaders can create positive and nurturing environments that support the academic success, personal growth, and well-being of all individuals involved in the educational process.

Authentic Leadership. The Authentic Leadership theory was proposed by Bill George, a Harvard Business School professor and former CEO of Medtronic (Heiss, 2023). He significantly contributed to the development and popularization of the concept through his book "Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value," published in 2003. The theory focuses on leaders being true to themselves and their values. Authentic leaders are transparent, genuine, and honest in their interactions with others (Northouse, 2021). This theory highlights self-awareness, self-regulation, and a strong alignment between a leader's values and actions as key components of effective leadership.

Laissez-Faire Leadership theory. According to Encyclopedia Britannica (2024), Laissez-faire leadership theory was pioneered by the British philosopher and economist John Stuart Mill in his *Principles of Political Economy* (1848). Laissez-faire leadership is characterized by a hands-off approach where leaders provide their teams with significant autonomy and decision-making authority (Norris et al., 2021). They allow their team members to take the lead and make decisions (Diebig & Bormann, 2020). This style is effective when team members are highly skilled, motivated, and capable of self-direction.

To highlight on the diversity of arguments, modern leadership theories play a significant role in expanding the understanding of leadership and provide valuable frameworks for leaders to adapt to various situations and foster positive organizational outcomes particularly in educational context. Effective leadership often involves a combination of these theories and the ability to adapt one's leadership style to the needs of the team and the organization.

3. Discussion

The debate over whether leaders are born or made has been a long-lasting one in the field of leadership studies, with no definitive answer. Different scholars and experts have varying opinions on this topic, and the consensus often falls in between, recognizing that both nature and nurture play a role in leadership development. This idea is in line with both Transformational Situational leadership theories.

Transformational leadership theory was first proposed by James MacGregor Burns in his book "Leadership" published in 1978. The theory was further developed and popularized by Bernard M. Bass through his work culminated in several influential books, including "Leadership and Performance beyond Expectations" (1985) and "Transformational Leadership" (1990) (Heiss, 2023). Transformational leadership theory emphasizes the role of leaders in inspiring and motivating followers to achieve common goals (Ytterstad & Olaisen, 2023).

Transformational leaders are characterized by their ability to articulate a compelling vision, empower and develop their followers, and foster a supportive organizational culture (Bakker et al., 2023). While some individuals may possess innate qualities associated with transformational leadership, this theory also acknowledges the importance of leadership development programs and supportive organizational environments in nurturing effective leaders.

Moreover, Situational leadership theory posits that the most effective leadership style depends on the specific situation and the readiness level of the followers. Leaders must adapt their leadership style to match the needs of the moment (Lussier & Achua, 2022). This theory encourages leaders to be flexible and adjust their approach based on the capabilities and willingness of their team members (Roe, 2020). Different situations may require different leadership approaches, and effective leaders are those who can adapt their behavior and decision-making style to fit the demands of the situation (Manning & Curtis, 2018). While certain individuals may have a natural inclination towards leadership, situational theories emphasize the importance of environmental factors in determining leadership effectiveness.

Some individuals may naturally possess certain leadership traits, but effective leadership in educational institutions often requires a combination of inherent qualities and learned skills (Bloomquist & Georges, 2022). Leadership mentoring programs that focus on developing essential competencies through training, feedback, and experiential learning practices play a significant role, in improving educational management in Tanzania (Galperin & Melyoki, 2023). However, the success of such initiatives depends on their customization to the local context and sustained investment in leadership development efforts.

The concept of nurtured leaders underscores the belief that leadership is not predetermined or fixed but rather can be developed and nurtured through intentional effort, self-awareness, empathy, adaptability, and perseverance (Heiss, 2023). Nurtured leaders understand that

leadership is a journey of continuous growth and improvement (Bush, 2020), and they are committed to investing in their development to become more effective leaders for the benefit of their teams and organizations (Manning & Curtis, 2018). Therefore, leadership development programs and education can play a significant role in enhancing leadership abilities, and real-world experience and mentorship can further contribute to a leader's growth. So, while some people may have a head start in leadership due to their inherent traits, leadership is ultimately a dynamic and evolving skill that can be nurtured and developed over time.

4. Conclusion

In reality, the nurture nature-against-nurture debate in leadership is not a binary choice. Most researchers and experts agree that leadership is a combination of both inherent traits and learned skills. Some individuals may naturally possess certain traits that make them more inclined to leadership, but these traits alone are not sufficient for effective leadership. Leadership effectiveness often depends on a person's ability to develop and adapt their skills in various situations. It is for this reason, that leadership can be portrayed as a skill that can be learned and developed over time. Many leadership development programs and courses exist to help individuals enhance their leadership abilities. Experience, education, and mentorship can significantly contribute to a person's leadership capabilities. Many successful leaders have attributed their growth to learning from their experiences and other leaders.

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