

Leadership Integration Paper

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Abstract

This paper will outline aspects of the shared leadership model which the author posits makes it a viable alternative to all leadership models that are vertically oriented in their structure and execution. This paper will additionally seek to make what the author additionally posits are seminal and beneficial connections that make this model a better fit for organizations of almost any type. This paper will not seek to add any research-based data regarding the efficacy of the shared leadership model but will utilize existing research data which has already been presented on the subject. This paper will further set out to do the following: identify the strengths and weaknesses of the shared leadership model; describe the research that supports the model; compare and contrast the shared leadership model with two other leadership models; and finally, describe ways in which I have used the shared leadership model and what aspects of the model I can work on to improve its utilization.

Keywords: Leadership, models, strengths, weaknesses, benefits.

Introduction

In their paper titled 'Cooperation Came First' (Hayes & Sanford, 2014) posit that in the evolutionary chain of events which culminated in the species we now refer to as homo sapiens, cooperation was the pivotal fulcrum upon which all other progressions within the species swung. The centrality of the notion of cooperation is so centrifugal to our humanity, that infants, whom we generally think of as having not attained any level of personhood relative to their rights as individuals – under almost every law on the planet, will, according to (Hayes & Sanford, 2014), deny rewards to a puppet that had previously acted in ways harmful to others, and bestow awards on puppets that had been seen to be helpful to others. (p.122)

Nevertheless, one of the more prevailing and powerful mythologies of modern first world societies which are dominated by the capitalist ethos, is the notion of the rugged individual who can pull him or herself up by their own bootstrap. This notion, which is celebrated in the U.S. in movies and sports, has cemented itself in the fabric of American society to the point of near devotion; perhaps worse, is that this motif has gained expectational value within the society. Hence, the stereotype of the lone genius who singlehandedly engineers powerful change persists (Carland & Carland, 2012), and is without doubt an attendant expectation of leadership which utilizes vertical models that accentuate individual performance and contributions.

However, the world of the modern organization has become, and will continue to become, immensely complex, making it near impossible for any one leader, no matter how gifted and talented, to master the changes that will unfold (Kowcolowski, 2010). These are the context in which I will present that the shared leadership model is best suited to navigate the present and coming challenges, which will range from questions of ethics as relates to human to machine

interactions and vice versa; or how we deal with aging but still employed populations (Schwartz, Hatfield, Jones, & Anderson, 2019).

The Supporting Research.

Ideas related to shared leadership are not new. Literature in almost every cultural setting reveals aspects of shared leadership that were routinely utilized. The Roman Empire was governed by a system of cooperative leadership for over four hundred years (Kowcolowski, 2010). Nevertheless, the notion that nations were led by Kings and Emperors persisted, even though decisions made in these realms were deeply influenced by officials in the service of these potentates – essentially rendering them shared leadership arrangements. (Kowcolowski, 2010) cites that seventy-five articles were returned under a search for shared leadership in the Academic OneFile Database.

These research articles delved into different professional areas but seemed dominated by research studies related to healthcare. Some other areas, according to (Kowcolowski, 2010) included: engine and equipment manufacturing, education, new ventures, and consulting teams. (Sunaguchi, 2015) cites that researchers in this field have struggled empirically and theoretically with the lack of studies available that could provide a deeper look into the process of shared leadership.

(Carland & Carland, 2012) present some research which is related to entrepreneurial leadership (which I posit is a form of shared leadership), which shows that references have been made over time to the concept of teams in leadership. (Sunaguchi, 2015) states that researchers had looked at the issue like that of shared leadership as far back as 1924. This example cites a Mary Parker Follett, who introduced the idea of the law of situation, which showed that in certain contexts, people followed a person who was not appointed a leader. (Carland & Carland,

2012) provides a sampling of some of the research done into the study of the role of teams in the founding of entrepreneurial ventures. (p.72).

What is shared leadership?

At its root, shared leadership refers to leadership models which embody the participation of several persons making decisions in collaboration with each other. It is the opposite of what (Kowcolowski, 2010) refers to as organizations characterized by their relationship with great men sitting in executive positions. Shared leadership models give great emphasis to ways of decision making in organizations which tap into what (Carland & Carland, 2012) refer to as the piggybacking of “concepts expressed by other minds in the discussion” (p.74). The shared leadership model recognizes the contribution of others in the shared leadership team as equally valuable. Shared leadership is especially distinguished by what (Kowcolowski, 2010) further refers to as, that atmosphere where leadership is distributed rather than invested in a single leader.

The shared leadership model besides shunning the investment of leadership into the hands of a sole operator, believes that organizations thrive where members take on leadership roles because this allows the organization to become more efficient within defined parameters (Mohammed & Thomas, 2014). The U.S. system of governance with its checks and balances between the Judiciary, Legislative and Executive branches is itself a form of shared leadership with the built-in explicit notion that no one branch of the government can make all decisions for the nation.

Additionally, the shared leadership model recognizes and utilizes the primordial realization of humans from the times when our ancestors occupied caves and trees; that we are wiser, stronger and more powerful (Carland & Carland, 2012) when we act in concert towards

shared goals. The shared leadership model can also act as a buffer against gender and race bias in leadership roles, because it opens leadership slots that may otherwise be closed due to leadership ascension struggles in organizations.

Weaknesses and Strengths of the shared leadership model.

That the Roman Republic was governed for four hundred years by a shared leadership model, speaks, I think, to the possible success the model can generate. Of course, success is to some extent a subjective descriptive; and so, for the purposes of this paper the weaknesses and strengths of the shared leadership model will be laid out as related to the information, to some extent, currently in the literature.

Strengths: The shared leadership model offers “synergy and expertise” (Kowcolowski, 2010, p. 27), or as further stated by the author, two heads are better than one. This leadership model can eliminate stress levels usually borne by single leaders, in that the burdens of running the organization are shared by a team (Kowcolowski, 2010). The shared leadership model allows for shared organizational vision through shared ideas. (Carland & Carland, 2012) cite that, “Edison’s inventory factory had no partitions or interior walls” (p.74) allowing for the free flow of shared ideas which resulted in the production of seminal inventions. (Zhu, Liao, Yam, & Johnson, 2018) state that the shared leadership model could lead to increase in team trust and team performance. Trust is of utmost importance to any leadership model.

Weaknesses: Resistance to the implementation of the model is seen by (Kowcolowski, 2010) as a weakness of the model which is a result of societal conditioning that’s centuries old. To wit, people just tend to associate leadership with an individual. Some theorist posit that the shared leadership model is particularly suspect to the paralysis of analysis – where indecision amongst the leaders sharing organizational responsibility fails due to disagreement. (Zhu et al.,

2018) add that due to the more complex and time-consuming nature of shared leadership models relative to vertical leadership models, some studies have found that they may take more time to reach consensus. They also point out that shared leadership models may be plagued by “free riding and social loafing” (p.848). Additionally, there is the concern that the shared leadership model may come across as threatening to formal leaders who may see it as territorial infringement (Zhu et al., 2018). Despite these possible shortcomings of this model it provides a leadership model which I think will be useful to organizations in the complex world we all now reside in. Another weakness of the shared leadership model is that it presents the over-arching question of who is in charge when, or as (Sunaguchi, 2015) puts it, “shared leadership struggles to capture in which different people perform the leadership role” (p.199).

Comparing and contrasting the shared leadership model with the emotion intelligence leadership model. The shared leadership model and the emotional intelligence model have many things in common. In the arena of self-awareness which has sub-categories: *emotional self-awareness*, *accurate self-assessment*, and *self-confidence*. (Zhu et al., 2018) cites shared leadership as “lateral influence among peers” (p.837), a standing which can only be attained and sustained if adherents to the shared leadership model are self-aware. Adherents to the shared leadership model also must be able to self-manage in the areas of *transparency*, *adaptability*, *achievement*, *initiative*, and *optimism*. These traits are necessary for they allow members of the team to access each other’s ideas and thought processes to achieve optimum solutions. (Carland & Carland, 2012) refer to this as the cross pollination of each other’s minds. I do not think that the *emotional self-control* sub-category of self-management is necessary for adherents of the shared leadership model; because team members, freed from the restraints of free expression which is attendant in vertical leadership models, have to be able to freely express emotions and

impulses that would be considered disruptive in environments dictated by vertical leadership. (Zhu et al., 2018) see shared leadership as a phenomenon in whose environment influence is distributed among the team. I posit that in such an environment the freedom to express oneself is an important necessity. Because adherents of the shared leadership model occupy roles which would usually be embodied in the person of a single operator in organizations utilizing vertical leadership models, they necessarily must, for the success of the organization, exhibit all aspects of the social awareness component of emotional intelligence. The shared leadership model is still subject to the fiduciary constraints of organizations which are directed under vertical leadership models and so must include all the viable aspects of social awareness.

The relationship management category of the emotional intelligence model is of critical importance to the shared leadership model; team members need to be able to *inspire, influence* and *develop* others within the leadership team, and outside the leadership team. These components are pivotal to the success of the shared leadership model. (Kowcolowski, 2010) cites that leaders utilizing the model need to be able to facilitate purpose that is shared and offer social support. The success of these shared leadership components can be heavily influenced by the leaders' ability to *influence, inspire* and *develop*. The *change catalyst, conflict management, and teamwork* and *collaboration* components of the relationship management category of emotional intelligence are crucial to the shared leadership model and carries the same, or even more importance to the successful functioning of the shared leadership model. (Kowcolowski, 2010) speaks to the importance of teamwork and collaboration when he states that shared team models are only successful when characterized by relationships that are collaborative and information sharing that is effective. (Zhu et al., 2018) cites, importantly, I think, that when teams are operated in a supportive culture, the proactive behaviors of team members were more likely to

increase. The likelihood of these two leadership models intersecting is recounted by a study reported by (Lyndon & Pandey, 2020), which showed that individuals with high emotional intelligence, are more likely to engage in the utilization of the shared leadership model (p.526).

The second leadership model I will compare, and contrast with the shared leadership model – is the servant leadership model. (Trastek, Hamilton, & Niles, 2014) cite that the core tenant of the servant leadership model is that it seeks to serve the highest needs of others to help them attain their goals. By contrast, the driving force within the shared leadership model is to pursue an objective by leading each other to achieve organizational goals (Zhu et al., 2018). The primary goal of any leadership model in perhaps any organization, is to realize the stated goals of the organization – whatever they are. In the world of business organizations, the goal is usually related to the pursuit of efficient use of capital for the realization of equitable profits for the organization.

The servant leadership model ostensibly states as its goal the development of its people with the unstated presumption, perhaps, that the investment of the leader in their development will garner greater organizational efforts, which will in turn lead to the realization of stated financial goals. (Allahar, 2019) underscores this reality; citing that the servant leadership model has been positively linked to team effectiveness (p.47). The shared leadership model does, however, have some similarities with the servant leadership model. (Trastek et al., 2014) cite the following as characteristics of the servant leadership model: “*listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community*” (p.379). As noted above, the shared leadership model, due to what (Zhu et al., 2018) refers to as its “horizontal, lateral leadership” (p.837), necessarily has to incorporate the listening, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight and stewardship

characteristics attributed to the servant leadership model in order for it to be successful. (Lyndon & Pandey, 2020) articulate that in a shared leadership model, individuals are willing to both accept and exert influence. I propose that this, and other components of the shared leadership model, can only succeed, if they incorporate the shared characteristics of the servant leadership model referenced thus far. This then leaves us with the components *healing, commitment to the growth of people, and building community*. I could not find evidence in the literature reviewed for this paper, which showed that the shared leadership model has, as its direct imperative, the pursuit of these remaining characteristics which seem central to the servant leadership model. Hence, I would label these as contrasts between the two leadership models. Nevertheless, I think one can plausibly argue that these characteristics may be arrived at as a by-product of a successfully executed shared leadership model. (Zhu et al., 2018) points to studies which indicate that the shared leadership model had positive effects on teams' innovation and creativity.

The observation can possibly be made that the positive results being referred to here, are all being attributed to members partaking in the shared leadership model, who would be apart and separate from, anyone else in the organization. While a seemingly reasonable observation, its acceptance would necessitate that we negate any overlapping positive influences created for an organization by dint of the behavior of its leader regardless of the vertical leadership model they use. For instance, (Allahar, 2019) tells us that the servant leadership model is said to have transformational effects on its environment which undoubtedly does include those directly in the presence of said transformation; to wit, those working under the vertical leadership of the leader using the servant leadership model. It is clear, I believe, that the shared leadership model presents a greater organizational value because it embodies a high percentage of the components associated with these two leadership models – but additionally has horizontal and lateral power

responsibility sharing ethos which will allow it to capitalize on what (Kowcolowski, 2010) posits is a trend over the last fifty years, to move away from the concentration of power in the hands of any person - in lieu of leadership which incorporates the two heads are better than one philosophy that has served humans so well throughout our history. In fact, to a more than a great extent – I'd dare say that shared leadership can even be considered the norm which lies under the construct of every vertical leadership model's success – the shared leadership model is being utilized and always has been utilized.

(Carland & Carland, 2012) state that, shared leadership models are being used without being recognized as such by the very people utilizing it (p.77). (Carland & Carland, 2012) go further and state that the current body of literature demonstrates empirically that entrepreneurial teams (*which I posit are in fact using shared leadership models*) have better financial performances than such teams led by individual entrepreneurs - the latter undoubtedly using vertical leadership team models. Even one as great as Moses of the Christian Bible and the Jewish Pentateuch, upon whose Ten Commandments many would argue Western Civilization was erected – was admonished to utilize the shared leadership model by his Father-in-Law Jethro.

Nevertheless, as pointed out by perhaps all the referred works in this paper, we somehow still think we need to study and do more research on the shared leadership model. Which, in my opinion, is tantamount to saying that we need to do more research and study on the efficacy of the wheel – an object which has accompanied humanity perhaps over millennia. As pointed out by (Carland & Carland, 2012) “We know that a team is smarter and more effective than an individual” (p.75). Yet the myth of the hero leader persists in organizations which have great potential to affect life on this planet. It is quite possible that the real obstacle to implementing –

may, recognizing the already existing usage of the shared leadership model, is the still powerful cult of what (Zhu et al., 2018) refers to as the “traditional great man approach to leadership” (p.834).

In my own world of work my efforts to promote the shared leadership models have always been met with stoic opposition by those whom I posit stand to benefit most from the now dominantly upheld modes of vertical leadership models. Inevitably the terms used to describe them do not matter if they still insist upon subordination, through salary structure and enforced rank; and if they insist on commandeering the command and control mechanisms of organizations to the exclusion of all comers.

Of greatest offense in my struggles to inculcate whatever work environment I have found myself in as an operant – with notions of shared leadership models, are anthems of what I think are the overblown importance of alliances. I do not disdain alliances and am rather cognizant of their importance to the socio-physiological well-being of any gathering of humans anywhere. However, what I find detestable is the constant elevation of this biological necessity to virtual ‘open sesame’ status without which literally nothing seems doable within organizations. I very much doubt that as a society we’d make allowances for air traffic controllers who only provided air traffic guidance to pilots with whom they had shared bagels, and who had attended their sons bar mitzvahs or their daughter’s wedding. Nor would we I suppose tolerate power company employees who endangered public safety by shutting off power to subway trains carrying passengers whom, in the majority, were going to attend the championship game of a rival team.

These examples may seem far removed from the matter of how I’ve attempted to utilize or encourage the utilization of the shared leadership model at places where I’ve been employed. They do serve the purpose, I think, of pointing out how deleterious practices of affiliation before

duty can affect the world we take for granted. Yet on an almost daily basis this is done in organizations everywhere – with very few exceptions. Example: As a proclaimed subject matter expert occupying that shared leadership space described by (Zhu et al., 2018) as emergent leadership. Where “group members exhibit leadership influence over other team members although no formal authority has endorsed their leadership” (p.840). In this space, if I after working with a team member, or members, recognize that a person or persons have great potential that can be utilized in a shared leadership model manner – and I go to members of the vertical leadership model departments to make a case for that person’s utilization – I may be greeted by asinine questions like, How long have they been here? Or, did I see them at the last potluck dinner we had? These questions amount to a vetting of sorts of the person, and of my recommendation, which amounts to - they haven’t been here long enough, and I don’t know them. Never mind the possible contribution the person can make to the organization within a shared leadership model – whether emergent or otherwise – they’re immediately subject to stonewalling tactics orchestrated and upheld by the denizens of the virtual leadership model class who have vested interests in staying atop the organization.

One of the first things project managers and business analyst who are tasked with organizational change tend to do is make sure they have buy-in from stakeholders who have power within the organization. I think the conundrum that proponents of the shared leadership model must figure out is how to get buy-in from the very group of people who may feel threatened by the prominence of results produced by shared leadership?

I posit that enough comparative and quantitative research does not yet exist which would sufficiently underscore the notion that organizations led by shared leadership can and do outperform organizations led by vertical leadership. A specific area I’d suggest for this research

would be in the comparative results produced by already existing leadership teams in organizations compared to the output of the vertical leadership who preside over them – relative to what the two groups are paid by said organizations. I think the results would be rather surprising.

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